

# *Hong Kong Art Souls of India Bharathanatyam*



*Compiled By*

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Hong Kong*







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प्रधान कौंसल  
CONSUL GENERAL



भारत का प्रधान कौंसलावास  
हांग कॉंग  
CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA  
HONG KONG

12<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**MESSAGE**

I am delighted to learn that Ms. Chitra Shivakumar, President, Children Cultural Group (CCG), Hong Kong is bringing out the publication titled 'Hong Kong Art Souls of India – Bharathanatyam' to record the contributions of academic institutions, organisations, associations and teachers of Bharathanatyam in Hong Kong since 1993.

I take this opportunity to convey my best wishes to Ms. Chitra Shivakumar and members of Children Cultural Group, Hong Kong and wish them success for their efforts to promote Indian culture in Hong Kong and in their future endeavours.

(Priyanka Chauhan)

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हॉंग कॉंग  
CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA  
HONG KONG

20<sup>th</sup> March 2015

**MESSAGE**

I am delighted to learn of the endeavour undertaken by Ms. Chitra Sivakumar and the Children Cultural Group, Hong Kong, to bring out a directory of organizations devoted to promoting Indian dance, culture and art forms in Hong Kong, present and past. The Indian community in Hong Kong has played a laudatory role not only in promoting the Indian traditions, but also enriching the lives of younger generations by making them aware of their cultural heritage. Chitraji's work is continuation of such fine traditions. Details of the renowned teachers, as well as of youngsters who have painstakingly perfected the arts at a tender age, would not only serve as the useful reference guide, but also inspire several others.

I convey our best wishes and unstinted support for such worthy initiatives.

(Prashant Agrawal)  
Consul General of India  
Hong Kong

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I am very pleased to contribute to a well produced handbook on Bharatanatyam by Smt. Chitra Sivakumar who lives in Hong Kong. I very much appreciate this good work of promoting our performing arts in a foreign land.

Until I saw this publication I did not realize the intensity of the dedicated work you people have been doing in that part of Asian countries. My appreciation and congratulations to you and others continuing the great work of serving the Bhaarateeya Kala and Kalaachaar.

People should also know that our country's real name is Bhaarat (not India) which has a profound meaning. So our art form named as Bhaaratanaatyam.

All the best to your endeavours in serving the art of Bharatanaatyam, the epitome example of Bhaarateeya Samskriti ( Indian culture).

**NAATYAACHAARYA V.P. DHANANJAYAN**

Founder & President of Bharatakalaanjali,  
Chennai - A Premier Art Institution of Bhaarat.

# PREFACE

One of the definitions of *history* is the study of past events, particularly in human affairs. If the events are registered somewhere, the future generation will know where they are now and how the system has evolved to that point.

Keeping this in mind, we wanted to register all activities done in the field of Bharathanatyam dance, one of the Indian Classical Dance, in Hong Kong. Though a land far away from India, those Indians who came to visit or live here, livened up their life by following the tradition and teaching the same to the current generation.

Starting from 1993, since the inception of Vrindaban Academy which was instrumental in bringing a Bharathanatyam and Kuchipudi teachers to Hong Kong to teach the dances. There was continuous stream of Indian art souls in Hong Kong teaching this art. Though we don't know much about it before 1993, we planned this book to record the organisations which promoted this art and teachers who were keen in promoting this art in this land in various ways from that period. Regular performances in various universities, government organized functions, Indian associations has kept this art alive in Hong Kong.

There were many organisations who brought experienced well-known dancers from India to give the true taste of the art to both the Chinese and Indian community here. The first part of the book gives details about the organisations who organized such dance shows.

Teachers are most instrumental in promoting this art. I came to know about the art when my daughter started learning. When she was preparing for her graduation, a thought suddenly came into my mind to record the growth of this art all these years seeing so many interested artists learning and performing. So the second part is dedicated to teachers.



The Younger generation has put so much effort in learning the art and preparing themselves to become the ambassadors of the art, in and around Hong Kong. So the third part shows appreciation to all those budding talents who graduated by doing solo dance recitals in front of huge audiences.

I want to thank my daughter, Gayathri Sivakumar, at this time for giving me a chance to know about this art which made me compile this book "Hong Kong Art Souls of India – Bharathanatyam". I also want to dedicate this book to all the art lovers all over the world.

I acknowledge all the parents and friends who helped me in providing the photos and details. Special thanks to Dr. Siri Rama who went through the whole content and suggested improvements.

Heartiest thanks to the Honorable Purvizji, who supported in bringing this book to your hands.

**Dr. Chitra Sivakumar**

**Compiler**

**2019**



# INTRODUCTION

Those who visit the temples of South India always wonder about the poses of the statues on the walls and roofs of the temples. They are not just poses but they are the basics of the years old art of Bharathanatyam. Saint Bharatha believed to have lived during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD, and had written the account of this dance art which to this day remains unchanged..

## **How did Bharathanatyam came into existence?**

In Indian tradition, Lord Brahma is the God of Creation. He is also the creator of the vedas, namely Rig Veda containing Pathya (words), Yajur Veda containing Abhinaya (communicative elements of the body movements), Saama Veda containing Geetham (music and chanting), Atharva Veda containing Rasa (vital sentiment and emotional elements) and the fifth veda Natya Veda containing Panchama (having information and references from all the above four). This was then handed over to the holy man, Bharatha, by Lord Brahma to write and spread to the world. After writing the veda, Bharatha went to the demigods, Gandharvas and Apsaras, to help perform this art containing the elements of dance natya, nritha and nritya, before Lord Shiva who was the God of Dance.

Lord Shiva was impressed with this dance performance and asked Thandu Maharishi to develop this dance further into a Thandava style of dance otherwise called Cosmic Dance of Shiva. Parvathi learnt dance from Shiva and then created the Lasya form and taught this to the daughter of Banasura, Usha. Usha then passed it to the gopikas of Dwarka who then taught to other women. This heavenly art was passed on from one generation to another and due to varied aptitude and understanding, created various styles starting from Bharathanatyam to Odissi.

Natya Shastra became the basic of most of the classical Indian dances like Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi and Mohiniyattam.

## Why it is called Bharathanatyam?

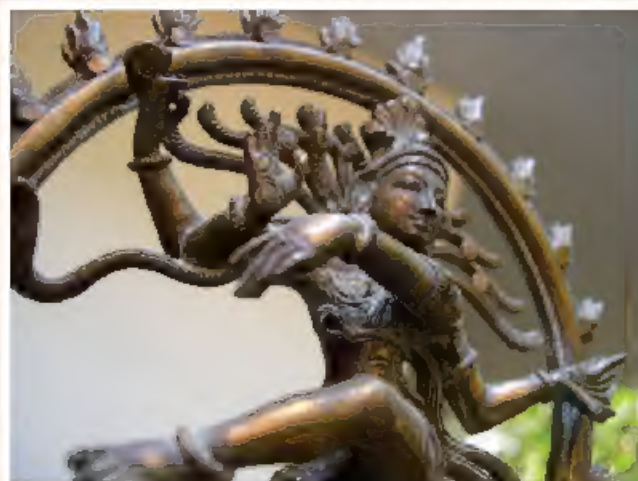
The Natya Shastra given by Saint Bharatha was also called Daasi Attam, Chinna Melam or Sadirattam. Few say that combination of the words Bharatha and Natya put together brought the name Bharathanatyam (pronounced ba-rata-na-tiam). Some say that it is composed of **BH**Ava (expression), **RA**ga (melodic mode), **TH**Ala (rhythm), **NATYAM** (dance).

The three main components of this dance are *nrittha*, *nritya* and *natya*.

**Nrittha** - Pure dance – abstract or “pure” movement. This category does not express a story. It is to dance for the sake of creating beauty using the movements of the body, the geometric patterns of the dance, and the dynamic energy caused by the rhythmic footwork.

**Natya** - Abhinaya – interpretative dance where the dancers express the lyrics of the song, evoking emotion.

**Nritya** - A combination of both nrittha and natya. Hand movements also play a major role in Bharathanatyam. Hand movements that convey meaning are called mudras, while hand movements that do not have a specific meaning are called hastas.





## What does the dancer wear?

The costume for this dance form is unique.

The costumes can either be a sari (wrapped in various ways) or they can be stitched from a sari fabric. The most common style of stitched costume consists of 3 pieces for males, 4 pieces for children, and 5 pieces for females.

A pair of loose pants and a large pleated length of fabric that attaches to the inseam of the pants – creates a beautiful fan between the dancer's legs during any half-seated or full-seated postures. And a sash going around the waist for male and a blouse, a sash that covers the choli blouse specially for women. The costumes are designed for the freedom of movement and to showcase the signature half-seated posture called Araai Mandi.

The dancer is adorned with lot of jewellery. It includes Netthi Chutti (head ornament), Chandra and Surya (two on either side of the head ornament), nicely plaited hair with flower arrangement, three studs on three parts of the nose edges, ear stud with jimmiki on the ear, short necklace and a long chain on the neck, vanghi on the hands, ornament called Ottiyaanam going around the waist. The ankles have a pair of anklets with few lines of bells called salangai. This anklet makes rhythmic sounds while the dancer hits their feet on the floor. The dancer puts on red dye on their finger tips, circle on palm and nice designs on the feet. This helps in revealing the hand signs and leg movements in an attractive way.



## Where does the music come from?

Carnatic Music is the soul of this dance.

Nattuvangam using cymbals helps to keep the beat along with the music.



In addition, instruments like violin, mridangam (double sided drum) and flute are also used.



The songs are mostly in regional languages like Tamil , Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada.



## How do the dancers use the movements?

Set of movements called adavus, or a combination of adavus called korvais put in a story telling format brings the unique style to this dance. The dancer uses poses, facial expressions, and hand movements to communicate the story to the audience. Epics and Hindu mythology are the source for the stories enacted in this art

*"Yato hastas tatho drishti  
Yato drishti stato manaha  
Yato manaha stato bhava  
Yato bhava stato rasa"*

"Where the hand is, the eyes follow  
Where the eyes go, the mind follows  
Where the mind is, there is the expression  
Where there is expression, there is mood/flavour(i.e., appreciation of art)"  
Hand gestures plays a very important role in conveying various details of the stories.

*Usually Bharathanatyam is performed for about 2 hours long and is done in a specific order.*

**Pushpanjali** is an invocatory dance piece where the dancer offers flowers as a prayer to the gods.

**Alarippu** is the first dance item a student learns in the Bharathanatyam margam. Alar meaning to bloom, and pu meaning flower. It comprises of a set of movements without any meaning or expression. The steps are formed so that it looks like a bud blooming into a flower. Even though there is no meaning, this can also be considered as an item where the artist salutes god, guru and the audience (It can symbolise the artist blooming into a dancer).

**Jatiswaram** like the Alarippu is a pure dance piece or a *nrittha* piece with no narrative component in which intricate sequences are fused with repetitive musical notes. The purpose of the *jatiswaram* is to create various beautiful forms, purely for artistic pleasure. No mood or sentiment is expressed. There are certain choreographic features that are typical of a *jatiswaram* – an elegant gait to each side of the stage, for example – that contribute to its unique quality.

**Shabdham** introduces *abhinaya*, or expressive dance with music that includes lyrics in praise of a deity.

**Varnam** reveals in full the abstract and expressive aspects of the dance, and builds on the rhythmic, melodic, as well as lyrical aspects of the music. Varnam is one of the most challenging and elaborate items in a Bharathanatyam dance performance. The dance displays mastery in both *Nrittha* (rhythmic footwork), and *Abhinaya* (facial expressions). This can be treated as a benchmark to judge any artist's talent. To perform this item one should have lot of stamina and concentration.

**Padam** is the deepest expressive item of Bharathanatyam. It is a purely expressional piece, without *nrittha*, and is usually steeped with the sentiment of love and its many manifestations.

**Thillana** is a lively item of pure *nrittha*, with specialized rhythmic syllables sung to the melody, where the dance presents an elaboration of the music. Each passage begins with graceful body movements, which give way to *adavu* sequences (*korvais*) executed in two or three tempos, culminating in scintillating *teermanams*. The *thillana* embodies the *lasya* (lyrical), aspect of *nrittha* in its alluring poses and exquisite patterns of movement. The movements of a *thillana* are joyous and expansive, giving it a vivacious quality. If the *alarippu* is the opening of a flower, the *thillana* is the showering of flowers throughout the performance space.



**Mangalam** marks the end of the performance for the day where the performer salutes the almighty god, guru and the audience for making the performance a success.

The great dancer Balasaraswati once said "The Bharathanatyam recital is structured like a Great Temple. We enter through the Gopuram (outer hall) of Alarippu, cross the Ardha mantapam (half-way hall) of Jatiswaram, then the Mantapa (great hall) of Sabdam, and enter the holy precinct of the deity in the Varnam. This is the place, the space that gives the dancer expansive scope to revel in the rhythm, moods and music of the dance. The Varnam is the perpetuity which gives ever-expanding room to the dancer to delight in her self-fulfillment, by providing the fullest scope to her own creativity as well as to the tradition of the art. The Padam follows. In dancing to the Padam one experiences the containment, cool and quiet of entering the sanctum from its external precinct. The expanse and brilliance of the outer corridors disappear in the dark inner sanctum; and the rhythmic virtuosity of the Varnam yield to the soul-stirring music and abhinaya of the Padam.

Dancing to the Padam is akin to the juncture when the cascading lights of worship are withdrawn and the drum beats die down to the simple and solemn chanting of sacred verses in the closeness of God. Then, the Thillana breaks into movement like the final burning of camphor accompanied by a measure of din and bustle. In conclusion, the devotee takes to his/her heart the God he/she has so far glorified outside; and the dancer completes the traditional order by dancing to a simple devotional verse."

## **What are the Courses offered for this art form?**

Today, certificate, diploma, degree and post graduate courses covering the practice and theory of Bharathanatyam as well as the languages associated with its development are available at major universities in India. MPhil and PhD courses are also offered in this field of art.



# **Registered Academies**



## **Vrindaban Academy of Indian Classical Music and Dance Limited**

**Vrindaban Academy** was founded by Padma Bhushan Pundit Hariprasad Chaurasia in Hong Kong on March 2, 1993. Dr. Siri Rama was the first teacher invited to Hong Kong and Panditji brought her to perform at the Academy of Performing Arts Hong Kong and for other occasions.

The academy succeeded in attracting more and more non-Indians to its newly-established school in Heng Fa Chuen, offering classes in sitar, tabla, Indian flute, vocals as well as the classical dances, Bharathanatyam and Kuchipudi.

In collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Academy of Performing arts, the Academy members has also given lectures and run workshops on the classical performing arts.

Major productions like *Sacred Dances and Music of India* by Anandi and *Classical Women of India*, *Eye on India Festival* presented the Indian art to Hong Kong residents.

Renowned exponents from India like Meenakshi Seshadri (dance), Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna (vocals), Aboli Sulakhe (Sarod) performed for this academy in Hong Kong.

The company existed up to November 2009.

Reference:

<http://www.scmp.com/article/47303/anniversary-extravaganza-queens-dance>

<http://www.scmp.com/article/109560/rare-sight-indias-delights>

## Gananjali

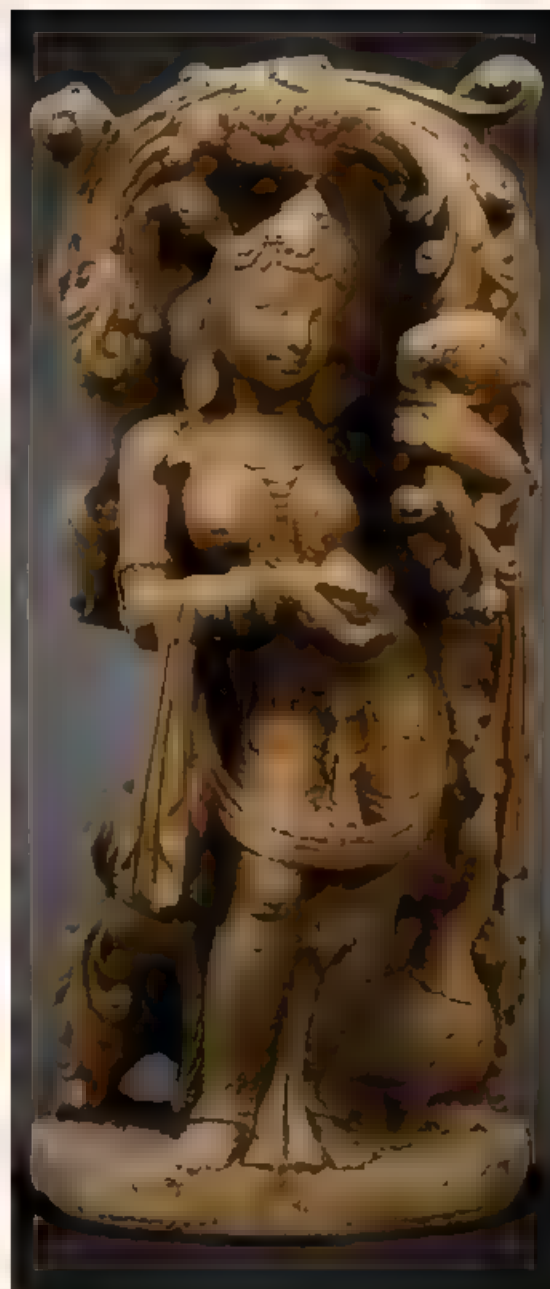
An inescapable feature of Hong Kong life is its unique mix of Eastern and Western influences, something that touches music as well as other spheres of life. In this environment Carnatic Music, Bharathanatyam and Tamil Theatre have grown and established as part of Hong Kong culture. This was accomplished by Gananjali - Hong Kong, the front runner in Indian Classical Music and Dance in Hong Kong. Dr. Siri Rama was instrumental in starting the branch Nrityanjali that organised the dance performances.

In 1975, Indian expatriate communities grouped themselves as Gananjali Singers performing on auspicious functions, thereby introducing Carnatic music in Hong Kong. Then in October 1992, Gananjali- Hong Kong formally registered itself as an organisation, with an objective of popularizing and nurturing Classical Indian Dance and music not only among the Indian community but also among the local Chinese populace and other foreign expatriates. The activities of Gananjali were expanded to invite and host concerts and dance recitals of super musicians and dancers from the subcontinent. In its 26 years of existence in Hong Kong from 1975 to 2001, Gananjali has held about 90 such concerts successfully. The attendance by non Indians, Chinese, Europeans and other nationalities increased with every concert.

Lecture demonstrations and performances held by the various Universities of Hong Kong and Seminars on Indian Classical Performing Arts, mooted and supported by Arts Development Council, proved that Gananjali has realized its objective of creating an awareness in Indian Classical Carnatic Music and dance among the locals in Hong Kong.

Gananjali also witnessed the blossoming of young talents in music and dance through music classes and dance classes conducted by Gananjali members and friends of Gananjali. Gaanam, the music and dance magazine published by Gananjali has chronicled Gananjali's historical musical development, progress and achievements in the 26 years. I am proud to record that we have been placed in the map of the Indian classical performing arts world and are tremendously encouraged by this recognition and placement.

We wish to place on record the members of Gananjali – Hong Kong who were the backbones of the organisation besides the many other dedicated Friends of Gananjali who lent their support to the cause of Carnatic Music, Dance and Drama in Hong Kong - Sumitra Ratnam, Dr Seshan Ramaswami, Siva Sivananthan, Suja Srinivas, Sarala Panchapakesan, Shakuntala Vishwanathan, Sujatha Sundararajan, Vidya Ramani and Premalatha Venkat.





## **Sri Shakti Academy**

It was founded in 2003 by three internationally acclaimed Indian classical dancers specializing in different Indian Classical Dance forms - Mrs. Priyadarshini Ghosh (Mohiniyattam), Ms Ranjini Menon (Bharathanatyam) and Ms Neesha Jhaveri (Kathak).

The Academy was setup with the aim to educate the audience in the art of appreciation of Indian Classical Dance and Music and in pursuit of achieving these goals, the academy has been imparting classes to many students, organising lecture demonstrations and workshops at universities, providing performance opportunities to aspiring dancers, and presenting large scale original productions to the Hong Kong audience. The students of the academy get an opportunity to perform at its annual show named ANJALI. Some of Sri Shakti's original productions include "Panchabhoota - Dance of the Five Elements" (Feb 2004), "Vaama - the Feminine" (Sep 2006), "Tao of the Heart" (May 2007), "Krsna" (April 2010) and most recently "A Journey Within" (2018) - a collaborative production of 3 dance schools of Hong Kong.

With two of the founder members returning to India, Sri Shakti Academy is now being run solely under the guidance of Ms. Neesha Jhaveri and has been more focused in the North Indian classical art form of Kathak.

The academy currently has more than 50 students across all age groups and continues to grow in size and outreach each year. Students of the academy have actively participated in multiple cultural events in Hong Kong over the years, such as the "Asia Ethnic Cultural Performances" organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department of Hong Kong, "Republic Day celebrations" at the Indian Consulate, "India by the Bay Festival" at the Asia Society, events by Radio Television Hong Kong, BEYOND Bollywood and Hong Kong Trade Development Council to quote a few.

Sri Shakti Academy has also invited Padmashree Guru Sunayana Hazarilalji (Neeshaji's Guru) all the way from India, accompanied by great musical artists like Pandit. Somnath Mishra (vocal), Pandit. Kalinath Mishra (tabla) and Alka Gujarji to conduct workshops and dance exams at various occasions. The academy was blessed to witness and be part of Guru Padmashree Sunayanaji's performance at Lingnan University in 2017.

Over the past 2 years, Sri Shakti Academy has also gone international - with performances at various prestigious venues such as the Chiang Kai Shek Memorial Hall in Taiwan (2017, 2018), Nehru Centre - Mumbai (India) and the Kala Ghoda Festival Mumbai (2018).



## Cosmic Dance

Established in 2009 by Bharathanatyam performer, teacher and choreographer Oxana Banshikova, the mission of Cosmic Dance is to popularize Indian dance in Hong Kong and to create opportunities for Indian dance lovers to learn and perform a variety of Indian dance forms. Cosmic Dance concentrates on Bharathanatyam Indian Classical dance and its fusion with modern popular music. The team also works with modern dance styles and are continually seeking to expand their horizons.

Cosmic Dance Group is one of the most diverse and multicultural dance groups in Hong Kong, with members from different countries, cultures and backgrounds and they share a common passion for Indian Classical Dance.







# Organisations & Associations





***Consul General of India in Hong Kong and Macau*** (CGI) encourages the local Bharathanatyam performers by inviting them to perform during Independence Day and Republic Day events and recommend various dance groups to perform in events organized by Government of Hong Kong such as Asian Ethnic Cultural Performances and Book Fair Workshops are conducted at the consulate when prominent dancers in this area visit Hong Kong.

***Tamil Cultural Association*** (TCA) is a non profit organisation. TCA was established in the year 1967. Every year, Programmes are organised to showcase the Tamil culture and traditions. Bharathanatyam is always part of the programmes organised by TCA. Panchabootha dance ensemble brought all the Bharathanatyam teachers on one stage to perform about the five elements sung by Bharathiyar. Children are encouraged to perform the items that they have learnt from their Bharathanatyam teachers.

***Kannada Association Hong Kong*** (KSHK) is a non profit organisation established in the year 2005. Display of traditions and culture are the foremost objective of the organisation. They invite local Bharathanatyam artistes to perform during their Ugadi and Rajyotsava functions and in other events organized all over Hong Kong.

***The Hong Kong Telugu Samakhya (THKTS)*** is a non-profit organisation representing Indian States of the Andhra Pradesh & Telangana community in and around Hong Kong. It is a cultural and social organisation. The purpose of this organisation is to propagate Telugu Culture, Telugu language and Art forms among Telugu people and among other diasporas. They invite local Bharathanatyam artistes along with Kuchipudi artistes to perform during Ugadi (Telugu New Year) Sankranti (Harvest Festival) and Dassera functions and in other events organized all over Hong Kong.

**Malayali Association for Art & Culture** is a non-profit organisation aiming to promote the rich Malayali culture, and to make it available through exchanges in the form of art, music and literary events among the Malayali community here and to the rest of Hong Kong. The Association while organising cultural events to encourage talents within the community in Hong Kong, invite local Bharathanatyam dancers to perform along with Mohiniyattam performers.

**Indian Arts Circle** (IAC) is a non profit making organisation established in October 1978 and formally registered in May 1979. Its aims and objectives are to organise Indian cultural programmes for the members and the general public, inculcate interest in drama, music, dance, literature and visual arts among the members, and to co-operate with similar organisations. The group organises a couple of programmes every year to provide opportunities to local talent, and also invites renowned artistes from India.

Over the years, the Indian Arts Circle has set a platform for Bharathanatyam dancers in every programme they organise. While promoting the local talent, they have also invited renowned singers, musicians and dancers from India to perform in Hong Kong.

With the Consul General of India, and Dr. Hari N. Harilela as Honorary Patrons, and Mr. G.T.Gul as Permanent Adviser of the Circle, they encourage the Bharathanatyam art too.

**Children Cultural Group** established in the year 2000 and registered in 2008 was founded to encourage Indian children to learn the culture and its values. Dance classes were organized. Teachers like Mrs. Anita Francis, Mrs. Manjula Amaresh and Mrs. Sandhya Gopal helped in conducting the classes in Mei Foo. Many students learnt Bharathanatyam from these teachers and few of them succeeded in doing their Arangetram under the tutelage of Mrs. Sandhya Gopal. Children were trained in drama, singing and other stage performances too.

***BEYOND Bollywood*** established in 2015 as a charitable organisation with the aim to use Indian dance (including Bharathanatyam) as a medium together with Indian cinema, music and theatre to create a collective force among dance practitioners and establish collaborative partnerships with diverse range of NGOs, Universities, Corporates, Social Enterprises to mobilize and empower the underserved population through various community-based dance projects in order to advance the concept of cultural diversity, equality, respect and community inclusion.

This organization aims to build a platform to bridge different dancers to get connected and provide a network of dance change makers to engage and collaborate with each other so as to inspire them to expand their local and international awareness on creating positive impacts within individuals, communities and the world through their respective influence and talent in dance.

### ***Bharathanatyam and Hong Kong Residents***

Vrindaban and later with Gananjali, there was a massive interest in Indian classical dance with some noted local students getting awards and performing in many events. Anupama and Nirupama Anand who were students of Dr. Siri Rama were winners of Ms India- NRI pageants in Hong Kong and worldwide and were awarded for their talent where they performed Bharathanatyam items like Thillana and Bhajans. This actually created a trend where many aspirants of Miss India NRI pageants started their dance training for the talent rounds. North Indian students like Shanu Sadhwani and Rahul Chatiani learnt proper Bharathanatyam for many years and learnt a good portion of the margam.

Currently students belonging to different nations learn the art form from the professional Bharathanatyam teachers.



# Memories

Smt. Vyjayantimala in her book “Bonding... A memoir” published in the year 2007 narrates her experience of performing in Hong Kong for a charity show.

“This was followed by a couple of performances in Singapore at Penang and Ipoh. Thereafter, I went to Hong Kong. And for the first time we left our son Suchindra behind. He was just eighteen months, and had started walking just the day before we left for this tour. We were really missing him. It was an important performance for charity to raise funds for the disabled children of all nationalities in this British Colony. I had a friend Mrs. Kapahi, a foreigner married to an Indian, who had arranged for this programme for her NGO. Even the Indian Consul General attended the show. But then Hong Kong is a different cup of tea. It was quite revealing how the Chinese reacted to Oriental depiction in terms of art. Since it is Asian, some way or the other they understood. Before the programme everything was explained to them in Chinese and the cause was mentioned. They called it the royal charity and generously raised an impressive amount. I was stumped by this headline in the ‘Hong Kong Standard’, ‘The Grace of a Fawn and the Charm of a Dove’ reporting the event:

A classical woman in a dance of the spirit. The epitome of the classical Indian woman, according to great Indian romantic writers, should have the grace and eyes of a fawn, the charm of a cooing dove, the walk of a baby elephant and the face like the moon. Vyjayantimala has all these qualities in ample measure as was evidenced at her performance of Bharathanatyam on Wednesday night at the Jade ballroom of the Furama Hotel. The message of Bharathanatyam, and one cannot escape it, is the transience of God’s power over mere flesh. The dance then becomes a vehicle, which the dancer uses to entice, cajole and implore the Almighty for a closer union with the dancer. The dance itself takes shape during the dance, for depending on the mood, the time and the receptiveness of viewers the dancer can be transported into a rapture that is totally spiritual.

Vjayantimala and her troupe of talented youngsters gave a glimpse of how this can be achieved to a very appreciative crowd of Bharathanatyam aficionados. To attempt to be critical of her dancing is like saying that the sun does not shine on a cloudy day. The sun's brilliance is ever present, the clouds only obscure the view. The highlight of the performance was without doubt her interpretation of the classic *varnam*. The *varnam* is the soul of the *natyam*. In this the dance implores through love lyrics and provocative posturing, to heed her need for recognition by the creator.

Vjayantimala does this in her own unique manner. First as the coquettish handmaiden, she picks her way delicately through an intricate pattern of body movements and extravagantly flirtatious eye play. Then in a sudden change of tempo she becomes the worshipper surrendering herself to the lyrics and the double beat of the mridangam (hand drum), with her feet the rhythm of the Nataraja, the Hindu god of the dance.

Again, she quickly becomes a woman of mere flesh and blood in flurry of exquisitely timed arm movements that supplicates the Lord to take her unto him. The whole sequence is overlaid with a spiritual sensuality and this is where Vjayantimala brought her genius into full play. She was the eternal woman, good, sexual and submissive, whether to her art, to her country or to her husband. In parts, she brought out the versatility and the play for individuality that Bharathanatyam as a dance form has. Departing from the strict code of dancing, the group also presented a delightful soufflé of triviality. This was the dance/song interpretation of the well-known precociousness of Lord Krishna as a boy... Altogether a very rewarding experience and one that should be enjoyed by much more people in Hong Kong than the packed hall at the Furama





## **Present Gurus...**

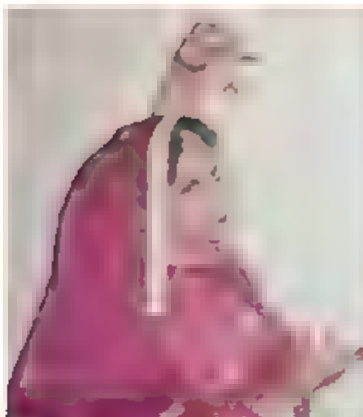
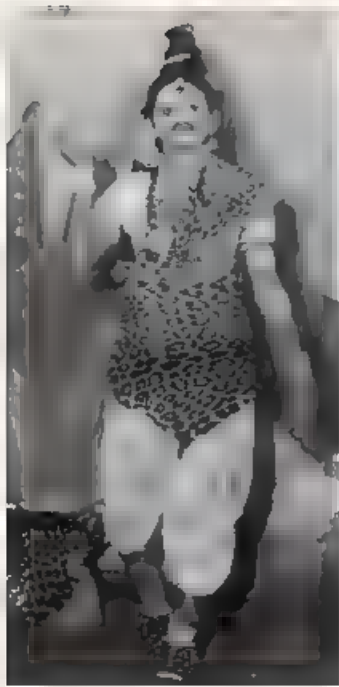




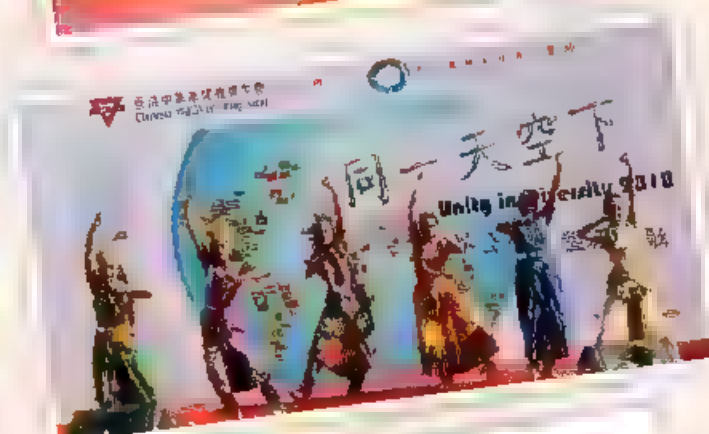
# **Sandhya Gopal**

## **Bharathanatyam**

Guru Sandhya Gopal began her dancing career under the tutelage of her respected Guru, Smt. Jayalakshmi Narayan of Kalakshetra in Hyderabad. After moving to Hong Kong, and starting with only a single student in 1997, Sandhya's Natya Shikara has flourished rapidly. Sandhya is renowned for hosting Hong Kong's first ever Bharathanatyam Arangetram in 2003 and has since imparted her wisdom and gift to many others. Her students are popular with the Hong Kong Government and the Indian Associations and are often called upon to showcase their talents in various cultural programs. Sandhya and her students have performed in all corners of the globe, and aspire to put Bharathanatyam on the world's cultural frontier.







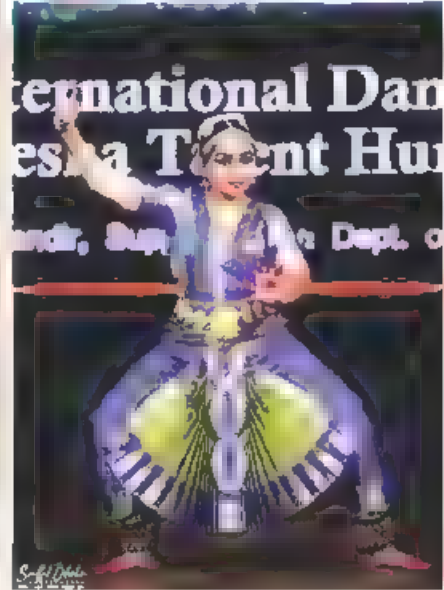
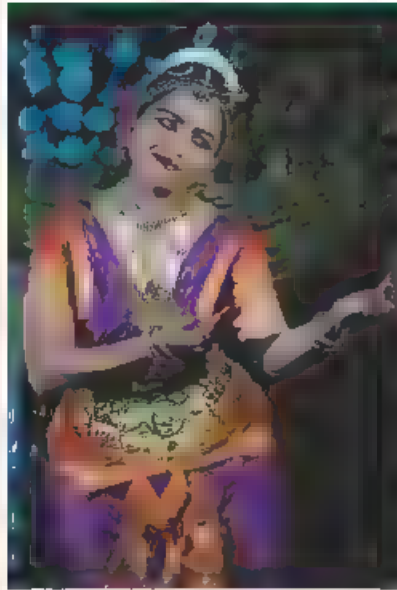
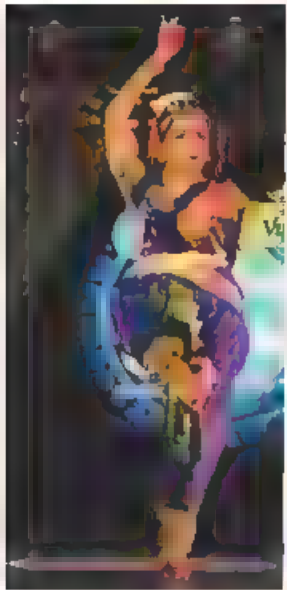
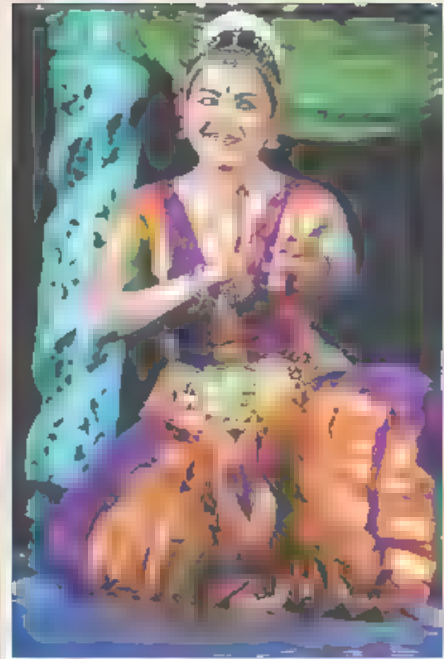
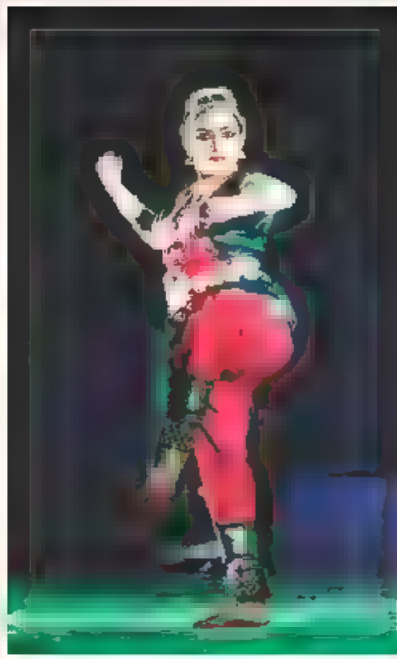
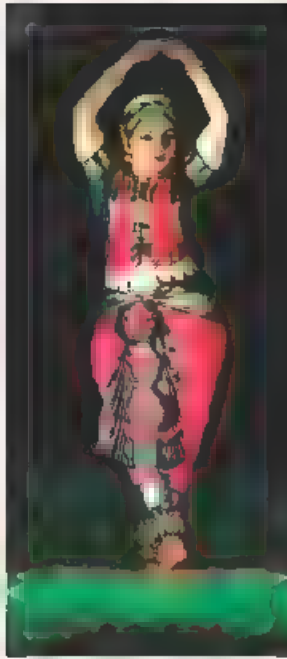




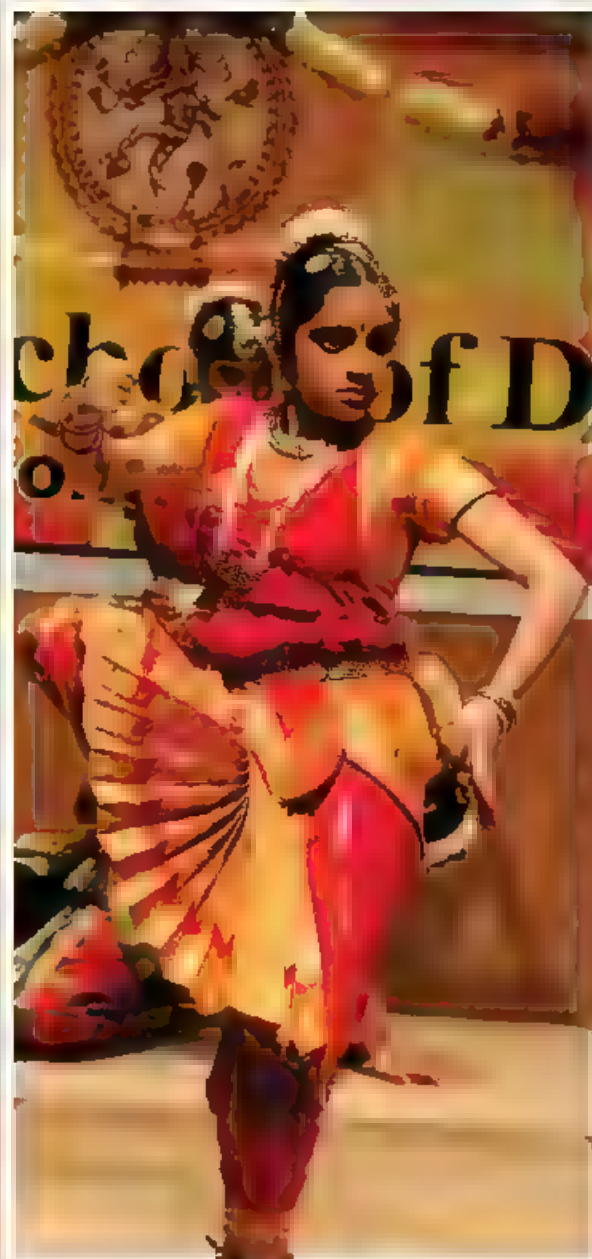
# **Roopa Kiran**

## **Bharathanatyam and Kuchipudi**

Naatyakala Choodamani, International Nritya Ratna Puraskar, Sangeeth Nritya Kalaratna Samman, Padmavati Pratibha Puraskar, Devadasi Smritimani Nrityangana Puraskar, Aryabhata International Award and many more. All these titles are for the efforts that Mrs. Roopa Kiran had put in this field from her early age of five under the tutelage of her Guru Dr. Vasundhara Doreswamy in Mysore. Though she is a guru of many students in Thailand and Indonesia from 2000-05 and Hong Kong from 2006 till now through Laasya school of dance, she is still a student learning Kuchipudi in Visakhapatnam from Nataraj music and dance academy under Guru Ms.K.V.Lakshmi. She and her team has performed in various events organised by Government and private organisations in Thailand, Indonesia and Hong Kong. She organizes classical dance festivals in Hong Kong annually. Her name is included in "Wonder Book of Records International" in the field of Bharathanatyam as a cultural ambassador spreading our Indian art and culture abroad.









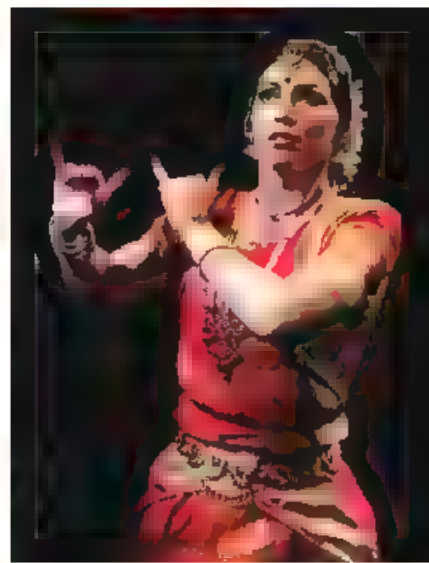
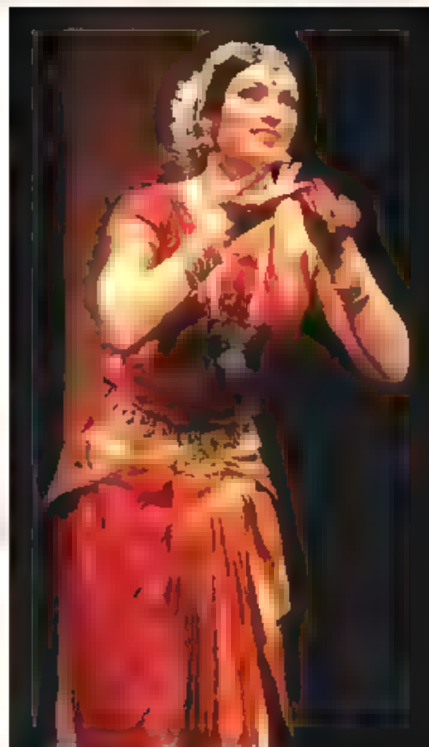
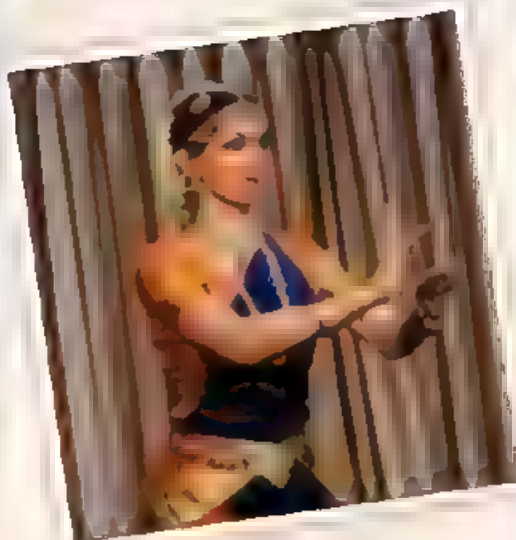
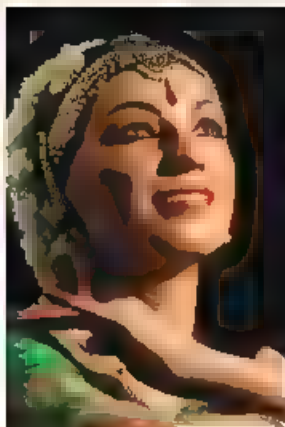


# **Oxana Banshikova**

## **Bharathanatyam**

Though Oxana is from Kazakhstan, she carries our Indian soul. Oxana is a Bharathanatyam performer, teacher and choreographer. She is a scholarship recipient from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and was awarded a Diploma in Bharathanatyam Classical Dance from the world famous Kalakshetra College of Fine Arts (Chennai, India) after completing a four-year course. She has also received a diploma in Nattuvangam (rhythmic dance accompaniment) from Kalapeetam Music School (Chennai, India).

Oxana has performed and taught this dance form in India, Kazakhstan, and Armenia and has been promoting Indian Classical and Fusion Dance in Hong Kong for the past three years through teaching Bharathanatyam to local and foreign students. She is the artistic director and creator of the Cosmic Dance Company, and is working towards increasing awareness of this beautiful dance form by staging and choreographing Indian dances, conducting workshops and collaborating with other artistes.







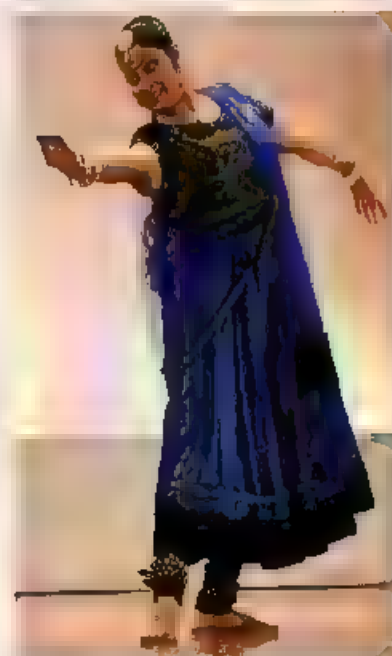
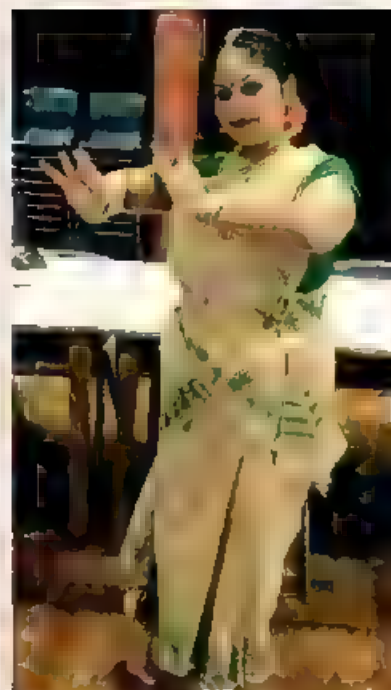




# **Tamilarasi Babu (Devi)**

## **Bharathanatyam**

Binish Mahadeven of Akshaya Arts of Chennai started to nurture Tamilarasi's (Devi Babu) dance career starting at the age of 8. Hong Kong dance life started from the year 2012 in Tsim Sha Tsui with 3 students after coming over to Hong Kong in the year 2008 while enjoying the family life. Students and herself under the name of Salangai Dance Academy have started performing in various events organised by Tamil Cultural Association and Government organisations making life busy.







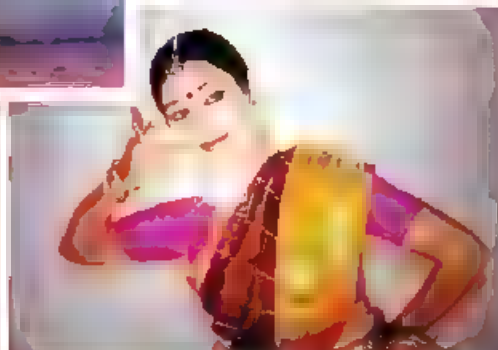
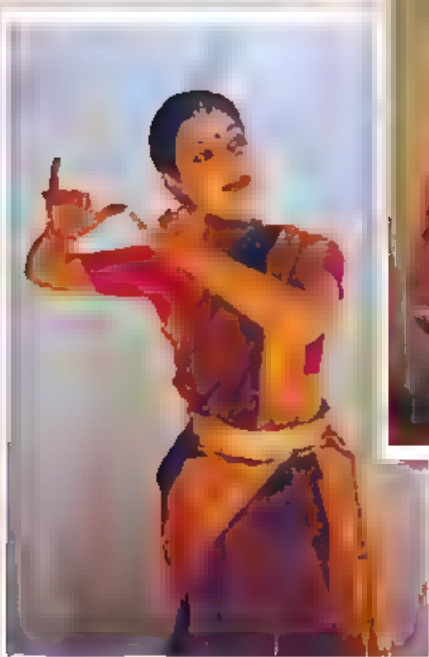
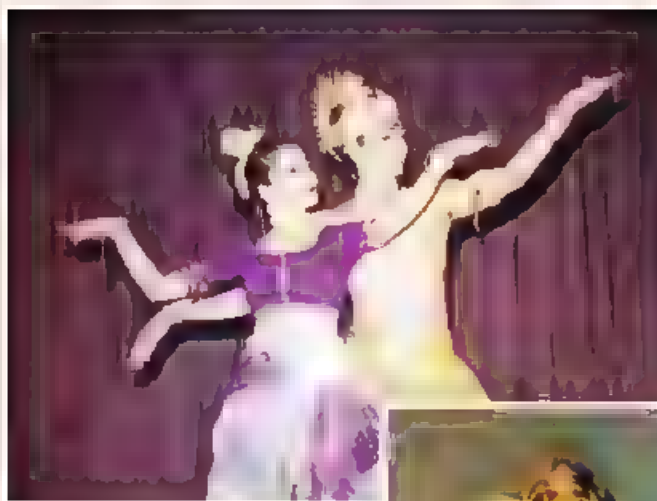




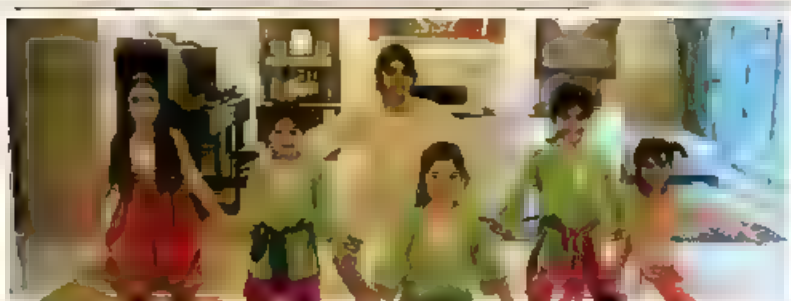
# **Pooja Sharma Kakkar**

**Bharathanatyam, Chhau,  
Indian contemporary dance**

Pooja Sharma, Artistic director and choreographer of Prayog Dance & Productions, Hong Kong is a highly skilled performer and choreographer, trained in Indian Contemporary Dance, Bharathanatyam, Chhau, Folk and Bollywood dance styles. She has performed internationally with eminent group of artists. She started teaching and choreographing in Hong Kong in 2012. Since then she has taught, choreographed and performed at various events. Prayog Dance has been associated with several organisations and NGO's and performs for them on a regular basis in Hong Kong.











# Sushma Gajanan

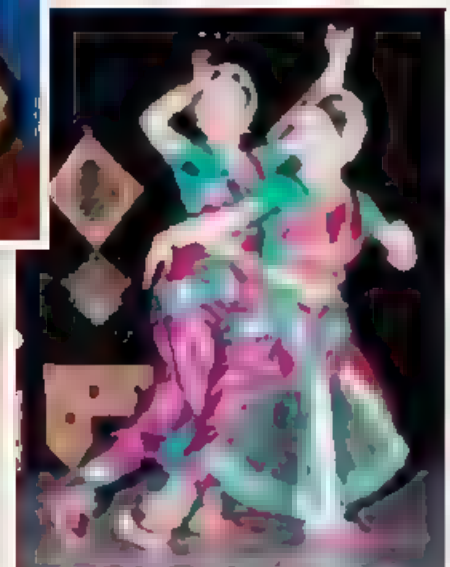
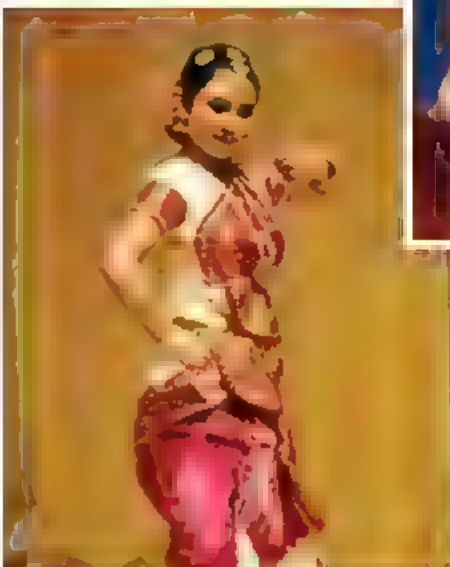
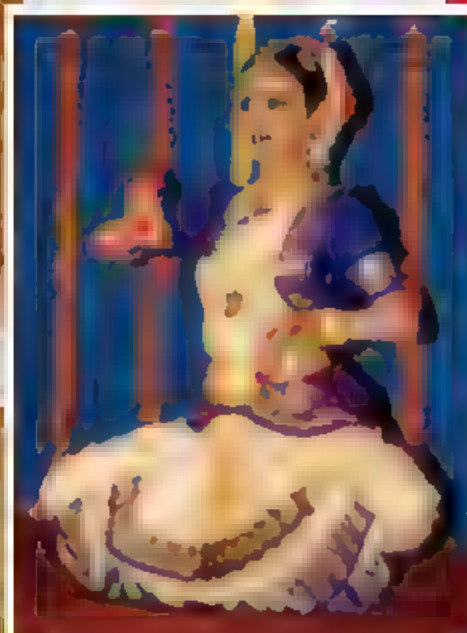
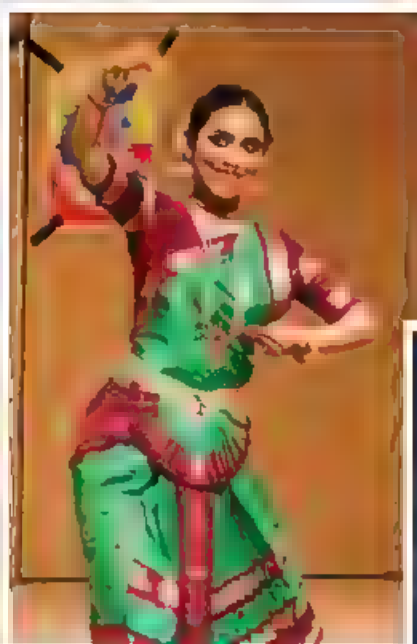
## Bharathanatyam

Sushma Gajanan, in exposure to this dance form has been from a very early stage of her childhood and since then she realised the pleasure and satisfaction by practising this art.

Right from the tender age of 6 years, she showed keen interest in dance and was initiated into this art by Guru Smt. Vyjayanthi Kashi a reputed dancer, celebrated performer and choreographer in Karnataka, India. Later Sushma advanced her training under Guru Dr Shubha Rani Bolar, a teacher of Pandanallur tradition of Bharatanatyam in Bangalore, India who is well known for her Abhinaya, choreography and teaching capabilities. Under the tutelage of her Guru, Sushma successfully qualified in Vidwat Dance Examination conducted by the Government of Karnataka (India).

As a performing artiste, Sushma has rendered over 100 solo and group performances over the years and participated in major dance festivals throughout India and currently carrying this forward at Hong Kong.

Sushma Gajanan currently resides in Hong Kong and also conducts classes.









**Former Gurus...**







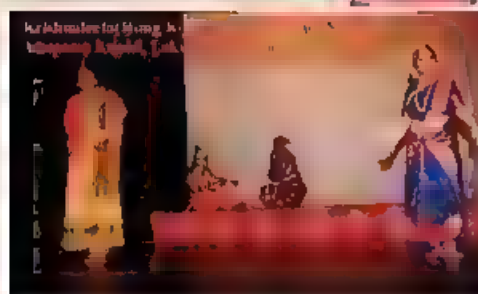
# **Dr. Siri Rama**

## **Bharathanatyam and Kuchipudi**

Dr Siri Rama was invited to teach Bharathanatyam and Kuchipudi at Vrindaban Academy of the renowned flautist Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia. Siri began teaching classical dance under Vrindaban headed by Dr Avisha Gopalakrishnan. Siri lived in Hong Kong from 1992-1999 during which she performed for all three leading Indian cultural organisations in the city, Gananjali, Indian Arts Circle and Vrindaban Academy, and also completed a PhD in Fine Arts at the University of Hong Kong under Indian scholar Prof Rajeshwari Ghose.

She also conducted numerous lecture demonstrations and workshops on Indian dance for a variety of organisations including the Center for the Arts at HKUST, the department of Music at HKU, the Friends of the Chinese University Museum, the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, the Urban and Regional Councils, and the Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival.

She staged three major productions, Tulsidas Ramayan and Krishna Leela with the support of Indian Arts society with a cast of over 50 artistes, and she staged Buddha Charita for the University of Hong Kong. Siri was also featured several times in the local media - on radio, television and in the local press. She was also invited to choreograph and conduct dance events for the International Travel Convention, the Hong Kong Kannada Sangha and for the Cantonese-language television station TVB-Jade.







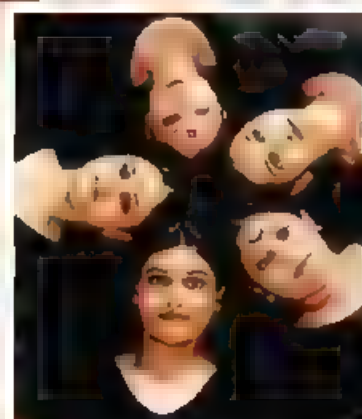
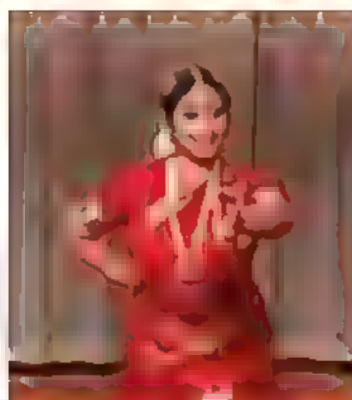




# **Ranjani Menon**

## **Bharathanatyam**

Guru Ranjani Menon commenced her formal training in Bharathanatyam with Guru Mahalingam Pillai of the Raja Rajeshwari School in Mumbai. Later, the legendary Smt. T. Balasaraswati herself accepted her as a student, and guided her personally until her arangetram in 1984. She has undergone training in Carnatic Music and Nattuvangam. Ranjani has performed extensively in South India including at famous traditional venues such as the Natyanjali festival at Chidambaram, the Music Academy in Chennai, the Tamil Isai Sangam and the Kerala Fine Arts Society among many others. She had toured in the UK, New Zealand, US, Europe and Asia for various performances. She is instrumental in starting the Sri Shakti Academy in Hong Kong and staged big events like PANCHBHUTA in 2004, VAAMA in 2006, TAO OF THE HEART in 2008 and KRSNA in 2010.









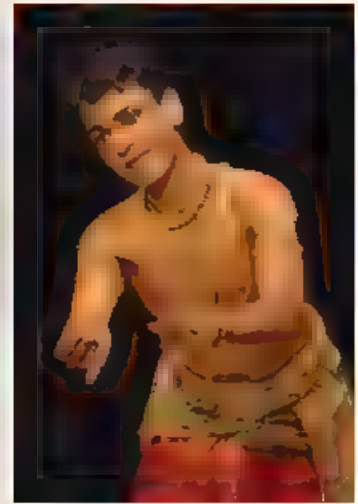
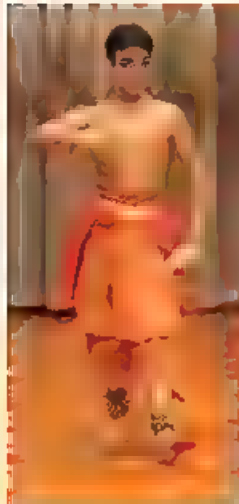
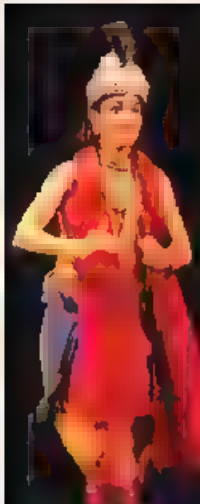
# **Santosh Menon**

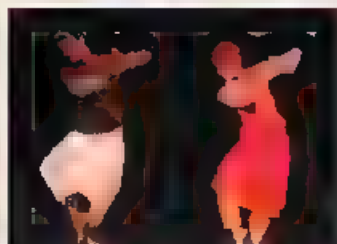
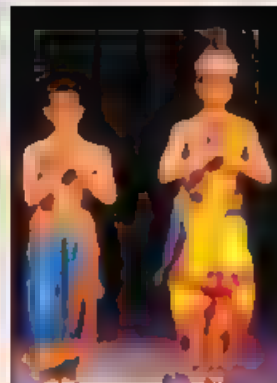
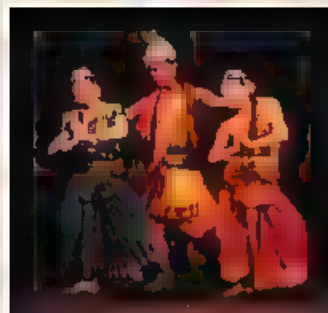
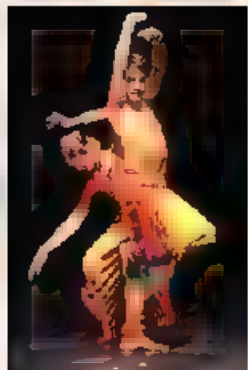
## **Bharathanatyam Mohiniyattam**

A gifted classical Bharathanatyam dancer with many international performances and winner of prestigious awards, Santosh began training under his sister, and father the late Gemini T R Gopalakrishnan Nair (disciple of the legendry Uday Shankar) at the tender age of four. He continued his training with Kalamandiram Shymala Ravindren and Kalakshetra Rekha Sanu (Ex-lecturer of Kalashetra) for 13 years. He then pursued his skill by joining Kalakshetra College of Fine Arts Chennai. Among few, he then got selected to do his postgraduation in Bharathanatyam and Carnatic Vocal. Thereafter he became a guest artist of Kalakshetra and a teacher for two years. Santosh has also learnt Mohiniyattam from Kalamandalam Kshemavathy in Kerala and Gopika Varma in Chennai.

He then moved to Hong Kong as a dance teacher in 'Yoga Plus' and then became a visiting scholar at the University of Hong Kong. He was also the artistic director of Passion India, a Hong Kong based company created to promote Indian Classical Dance and Yoga. In 2003, Santosh established his own institution Kshetra Dance Company to promote the traditional Kalakshetra style of Bharathanatyam. He has performed in many prestigious events in Hong Kong. He has also conducted dance workshops in various International schools and Universities in India, Hong Kong, UK and US. At present, he is in UK as a dance teacher, choreographer and performer.











# Anita Francis

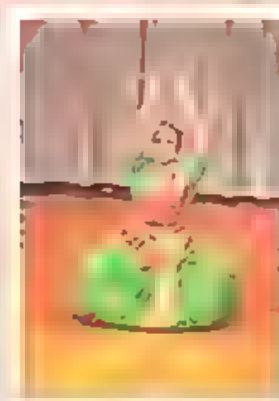
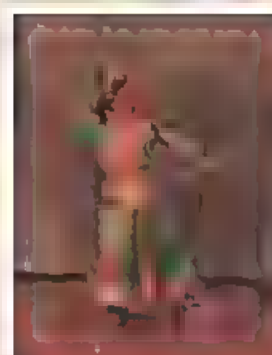
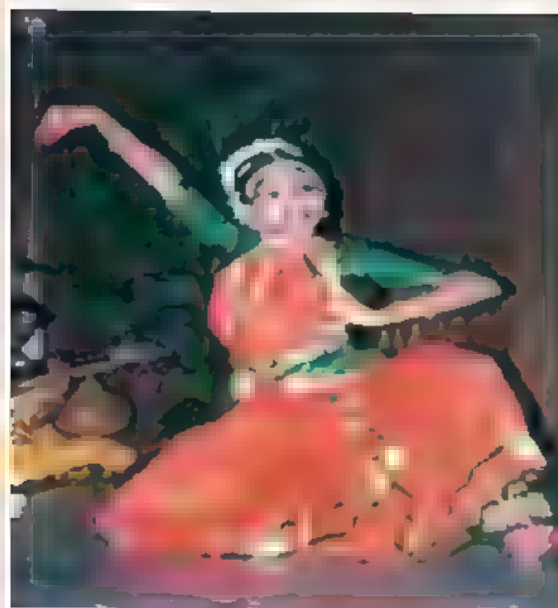
## Bharathanatyam

Anita Francis is synonymous with the Indian Classical Dance (Bharathanatyam) and Carnatic Music. She began learning both Bharathanatyam and Carnatic Music from Temple of Fine Arts (Malaysia) from the tender age of 5 years under the tutelage of Smt Selvamoney Selvaraju who hailed from Baskar Academy, Singapore. Then, Anita continued learning diverse aspects of the Classical dance and Carnatic music from galaxy of eminent teachers in Kalashetra in Chennai, India.

Today she is a renowned artist who has synthesised the knowledge she received from her teachers in the Fine Arts to imprint classical dance and carnatic music with her personal vision of the dance and music. She taught Hong Kong children this art for a few years.

Anita has performed and represented the Fine Arts throughout Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, India, New Zealand and Europe.

She is also a mentor for over two hundred disciples of Sri Surna Fine Arts (Malaysia). She imparts her immense knowledge to others by teaching dance, composing and choreographing.







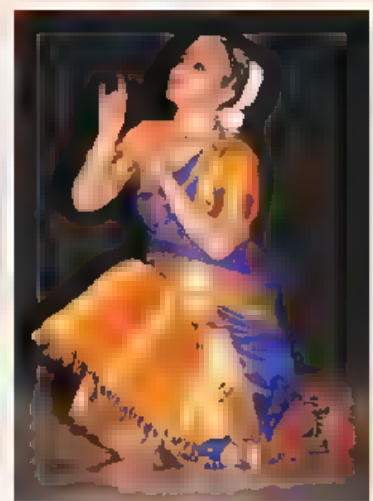
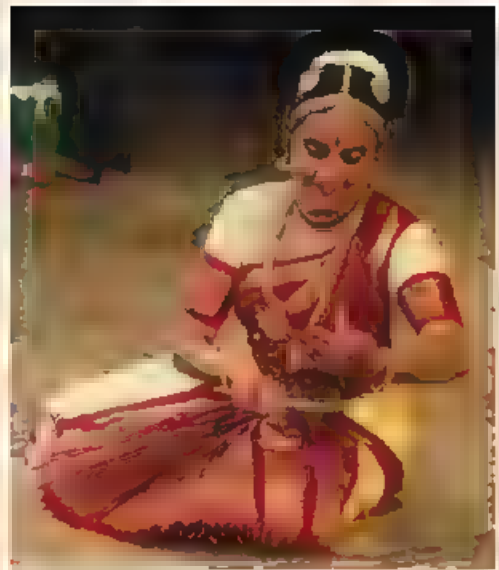
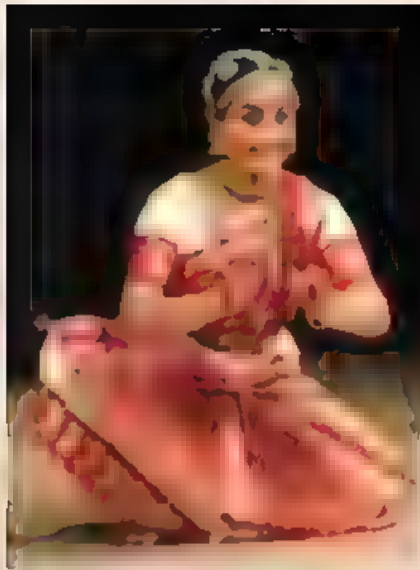


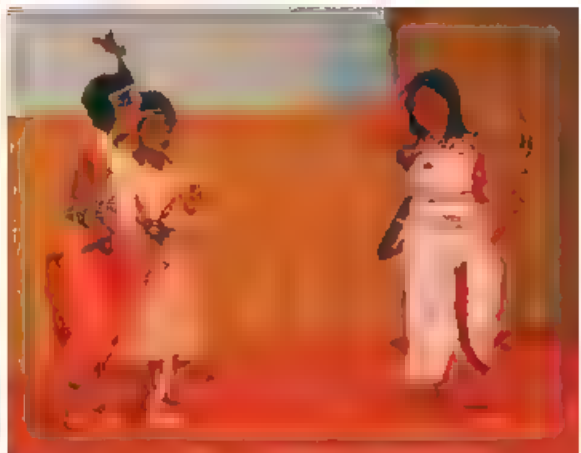


# Manjula Amaresh

## Bharathanatyam

Being an established artiste from Bangalore and one of the senior disciples of the legendary Gurus - Padmabhushan Dhananjayans and Padmabhushan Smt. Kalanidhi Narayanan and *Masters Degree in Bharathanatyam*. Smt. Manjula has to her credit more than 250 performances in India, United States of America, Middle East and Hong Kong. She taught Hong Kong children for two years. *She has conceptualized and choreographed a huge Natyam Production, "Panchatantra" involving 115 children and Solo Thematic Production, "Akka Mahadevi" and won the hearts of many.* She is director of "BHARATHAANUNADA" – a school for Bharathanatyam in Bengaluru and teaches this beautiful art form to many young aspirants.







## Other Dancers...



**Smt. Anandi Ramachandran** trained several students at Pundit. Hari Prasad Chaurasia's Vrindaban Academy of Classical Dance and Music in Hong Kong.



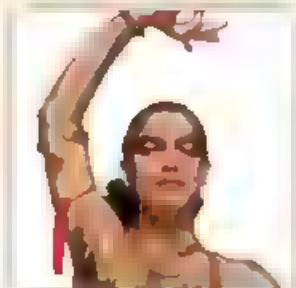
**Smt. Priyadarshini Ghosh** dance exponent of Bharathanatyam and Mohiniyattam was a part time and guest teacher at The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts.

**Smt. Lakshmi Shrikanth** took over the classes of Dr. Siri Rama in the Sri Sathya Sai centre, Tsim Sha Tsui.

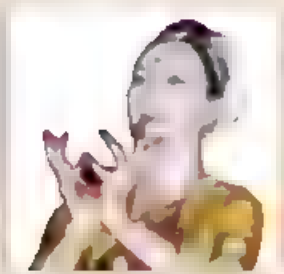
**Smt. Swapna Bhide**, masters in dance in Bharathanatyam from Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya in India, learnt her dance under the guidance of Guru Smt. Dr. Kanak Rele. She has performed in various programmes in India, Singapore and Hong Kong.



**Sri. Rajendra Nyathi** comes from a life of Yogis in India. He is highly trained and passionate about traditional Indian dances and more creative movements that blend yoga with dance. He is a master of the classical forms of Indian dance and holds demonstrations all over the world. He taught dance to some students in Hong Kong.



## **Bharathanatyam Performers with Indian Spirit**



**Naoko Kawai (Japan)**



**Laurens Markens (France)**

**Akiko Matsumoto (Japan)**



**Sandrine Bommelaere (France)**





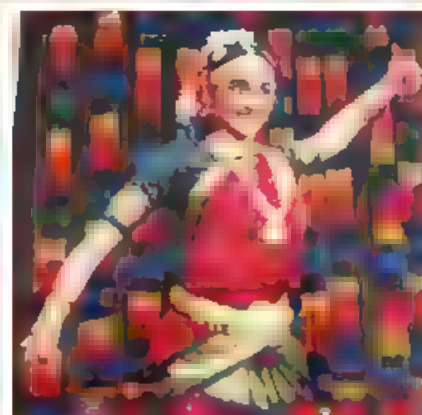
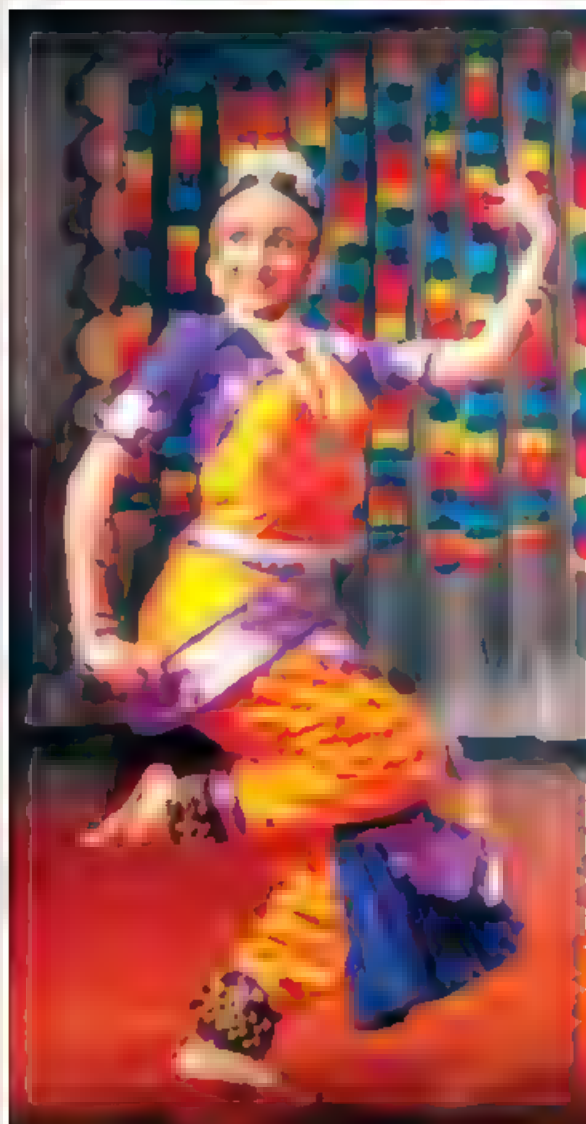


# **Solo Recitals**

## **Arangetram Dancers**

# Soumya Hariswamy

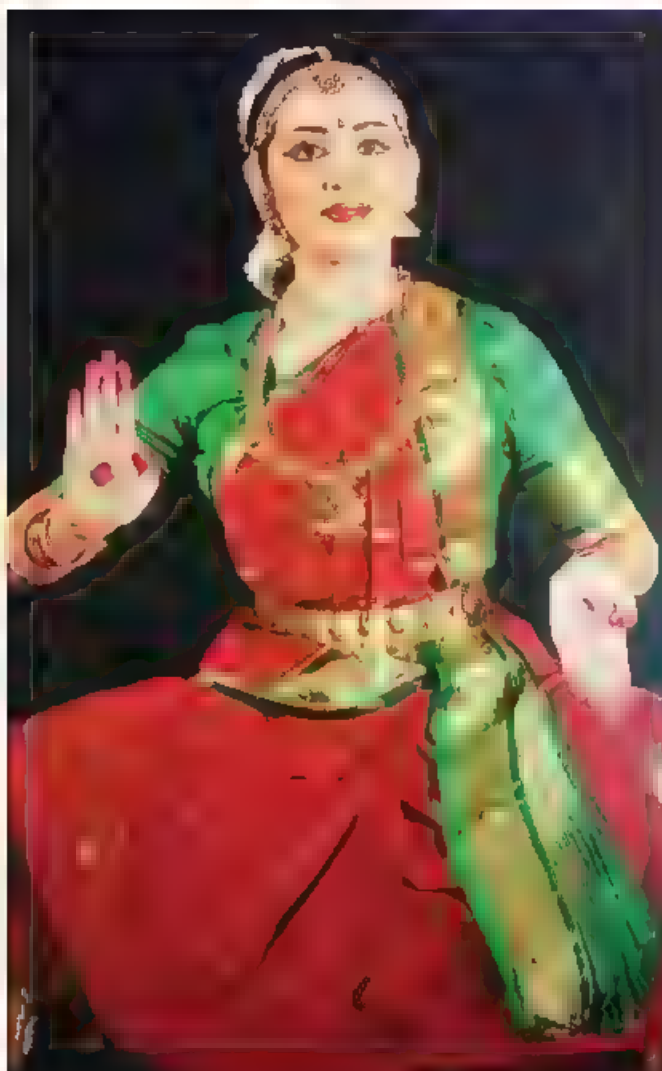
26th January 2003, Hong Kong





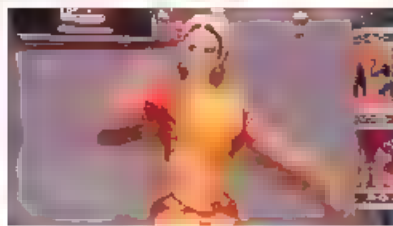
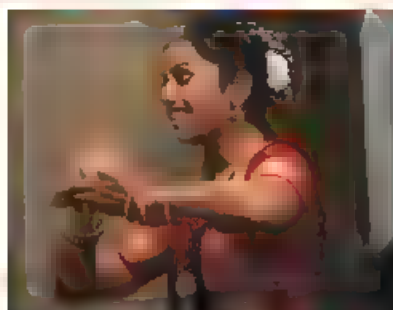
# Choppalli Rao

21st January 2006, Hong Kong



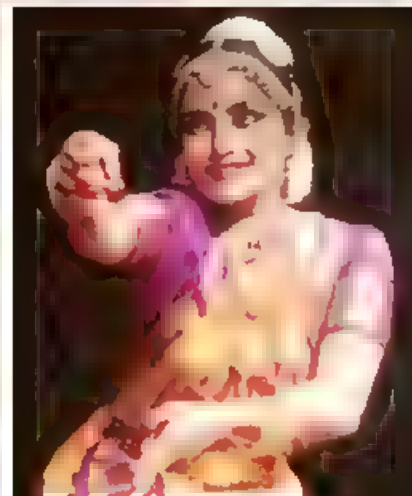
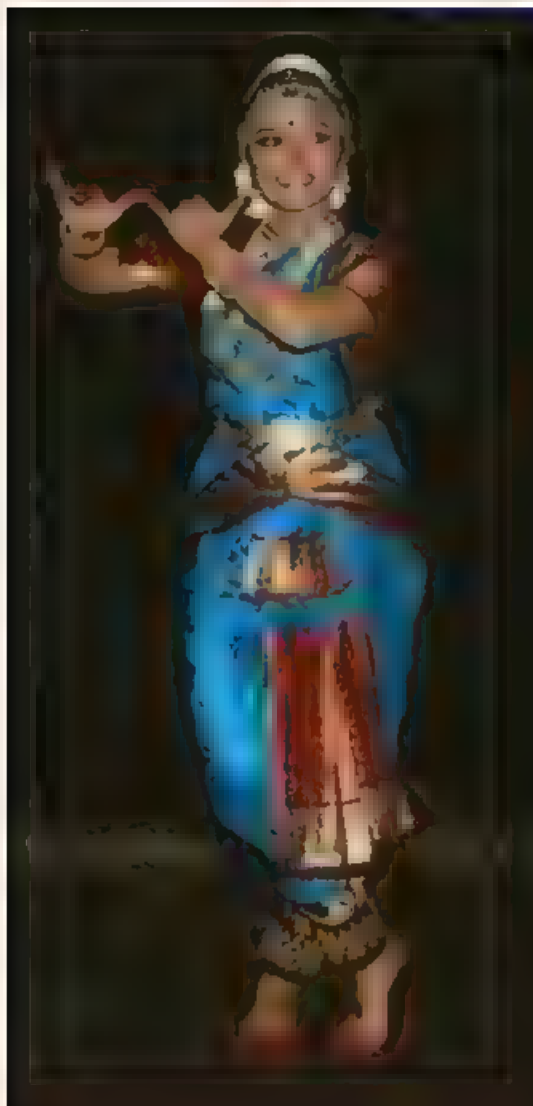
# Umaiyal Arunachalam

8th September 2006, Hong Kong



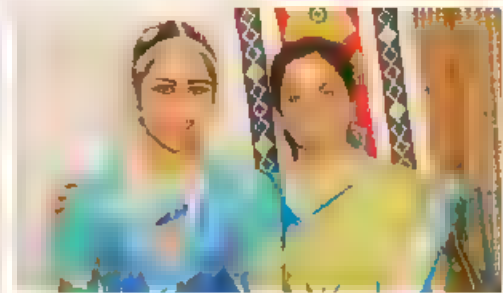
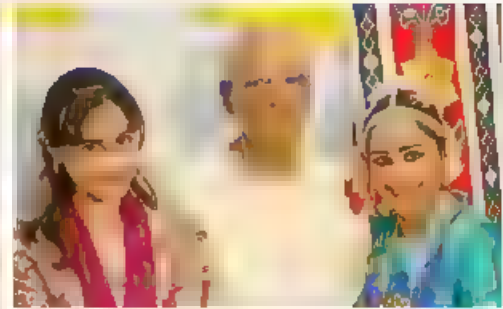
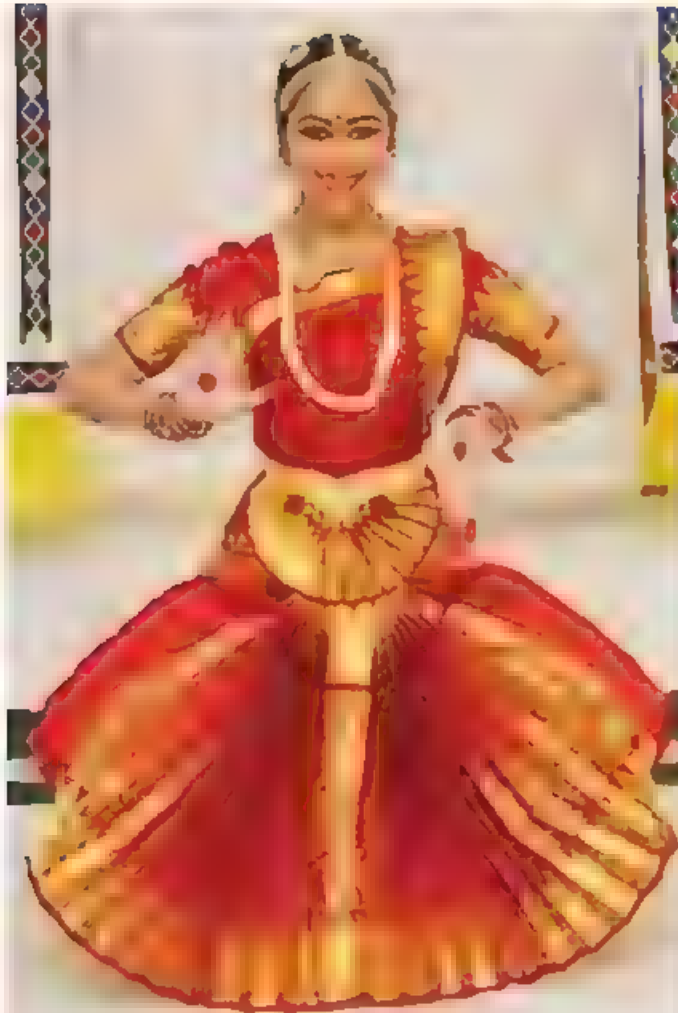
# Shurabhi Das

4th April 2008, Hong Kong



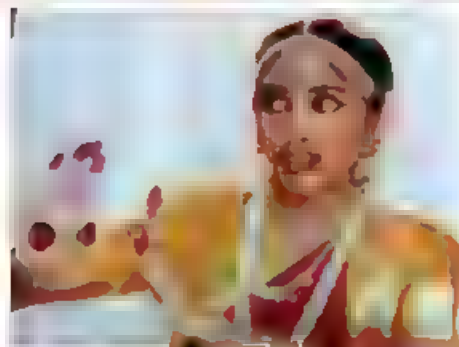
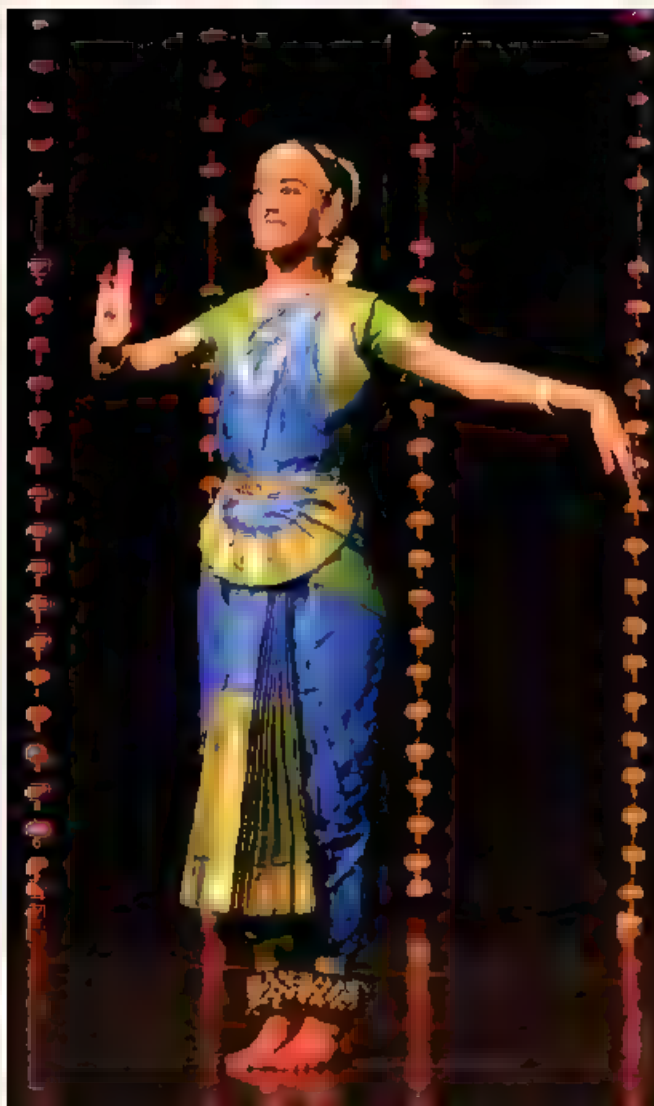
# Renuka Santhanam

25th December 2008, Hong Kong



# Sakshi Kumar

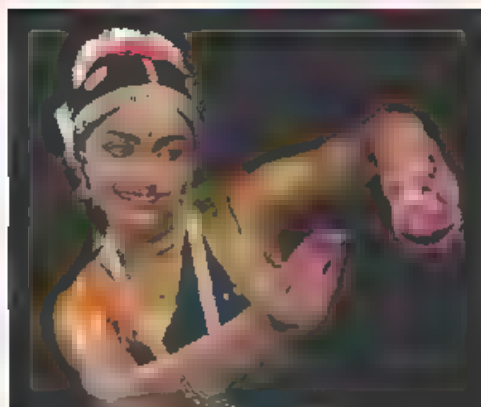
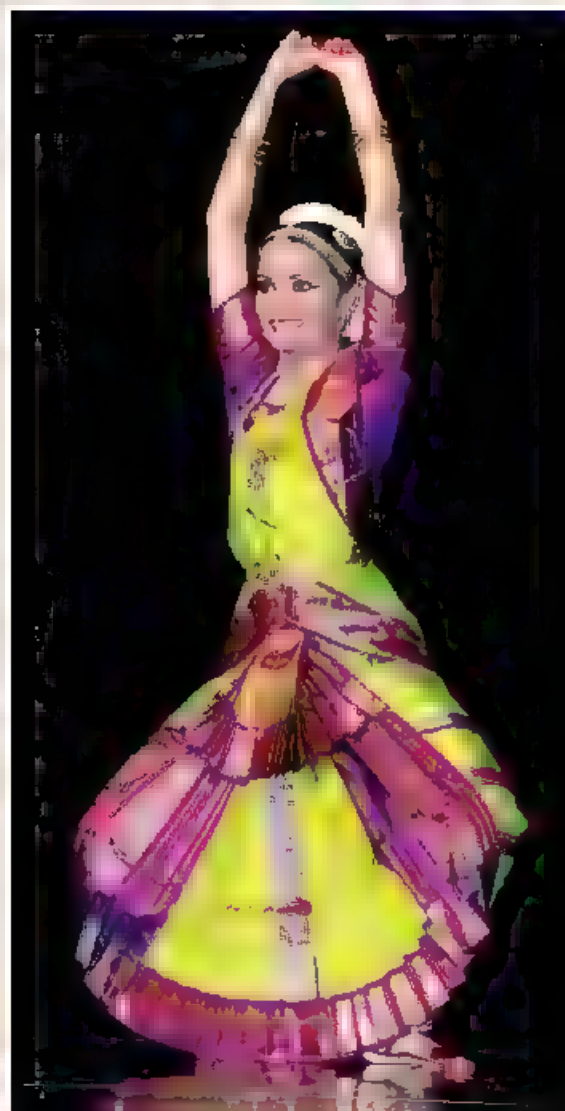
28th May 2009, Hong Kong





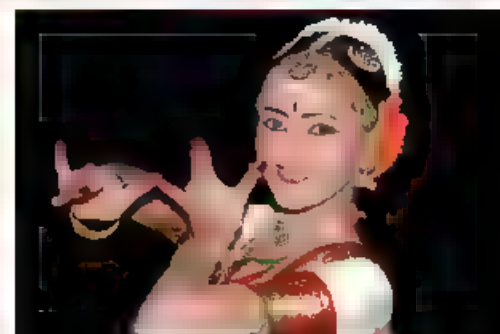
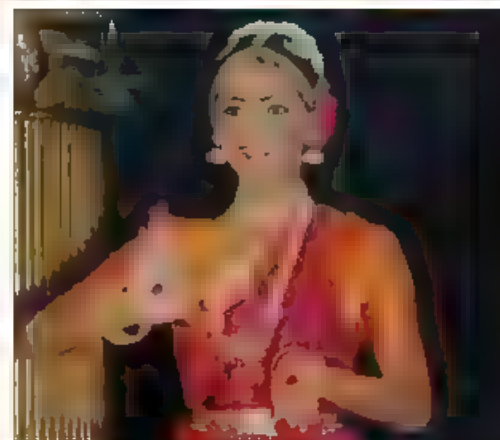
# Sakshi Kaushik

11th July 2009, Chennai | 19th September 2009, Hong Kong



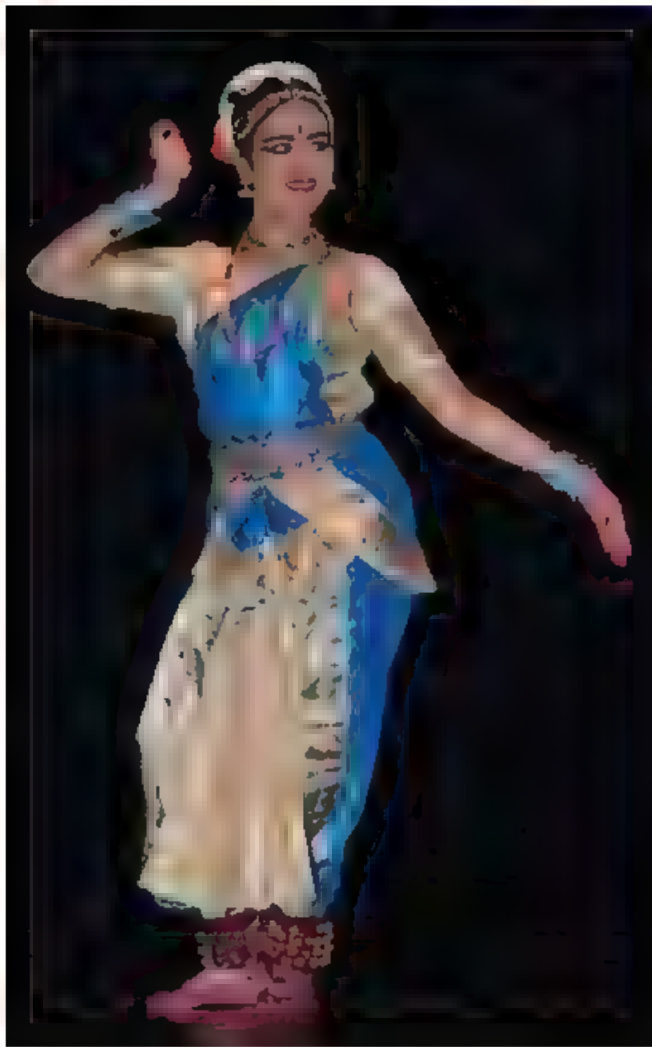
# Vaishnavi Kaushik

8th August 2009, Bangalore



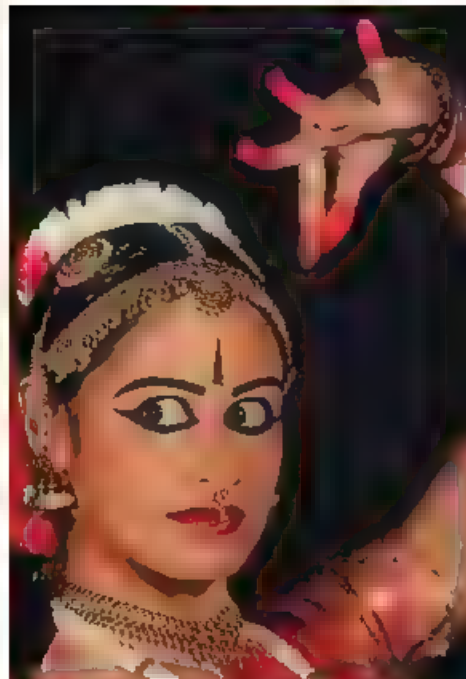
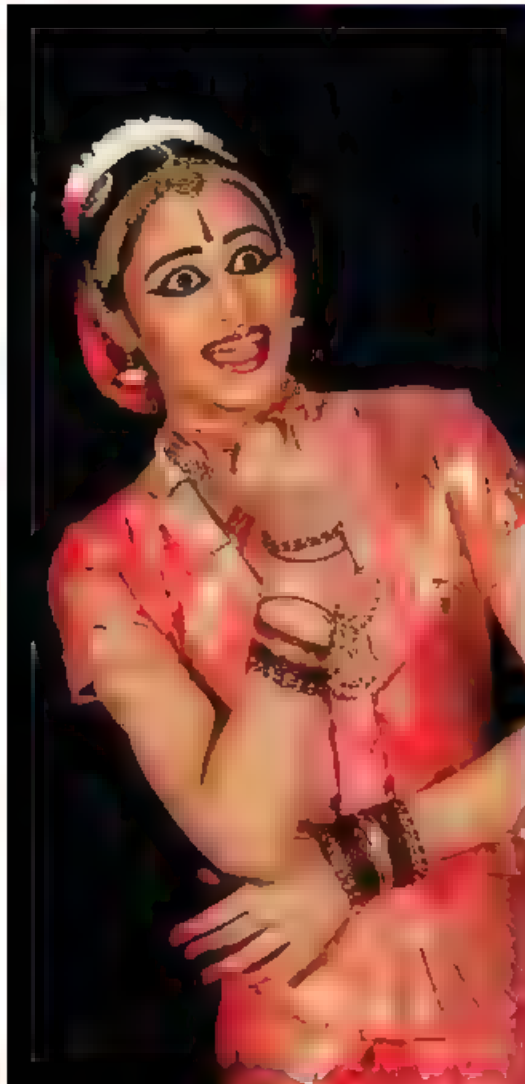
# Nidhi Birla

29th March 2012, Hong Kong



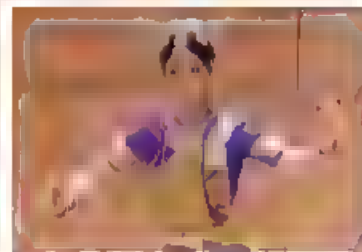
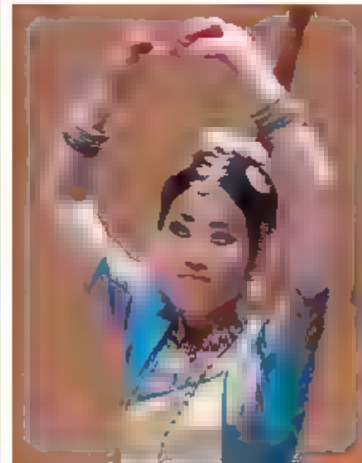
# Radhika Santhanam

3rd August 2012, Chennai



# Iris Li

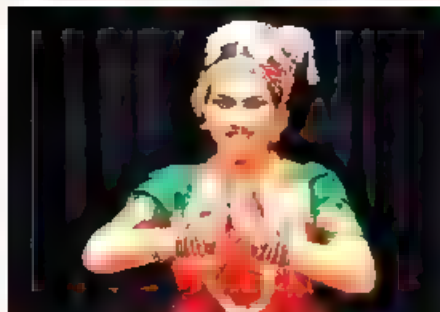
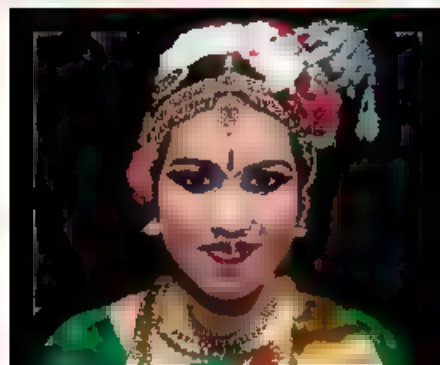
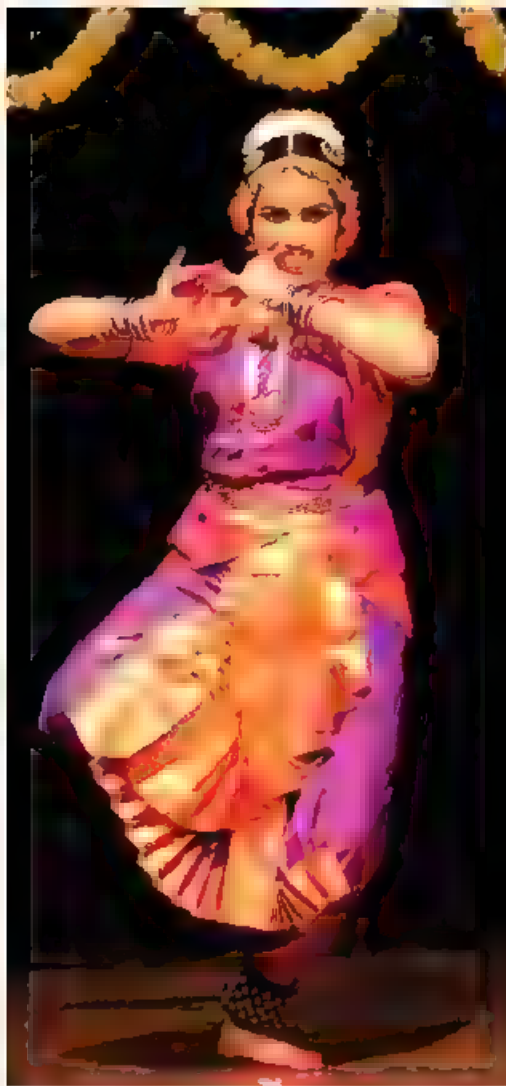
18th May 2013, Hong Kong





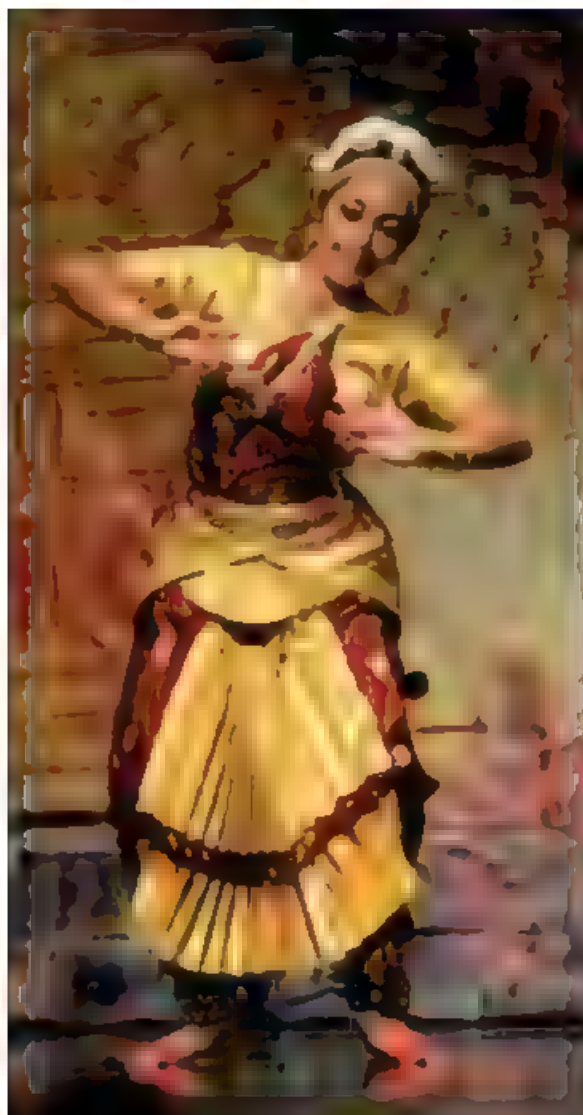
# Sharanya Ramaswamy

28th December 2013, Mumbai



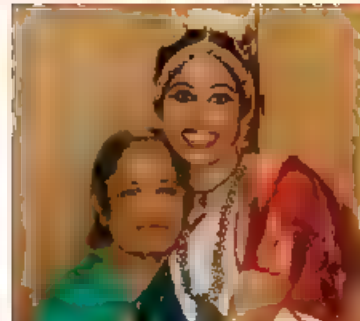
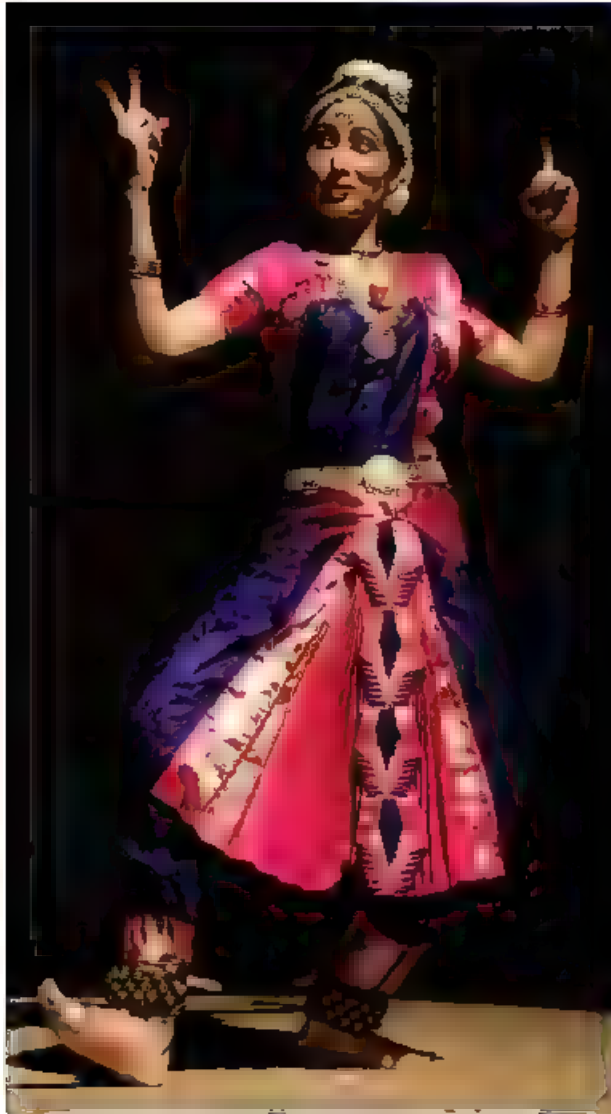
# Gayathri Sivakumar

10th October 2014, Hong Kong



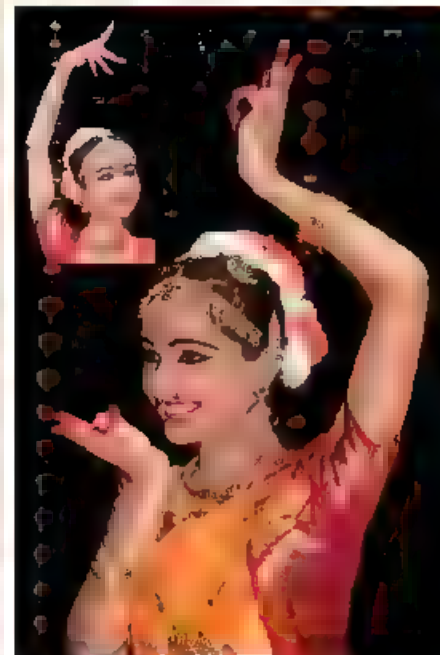
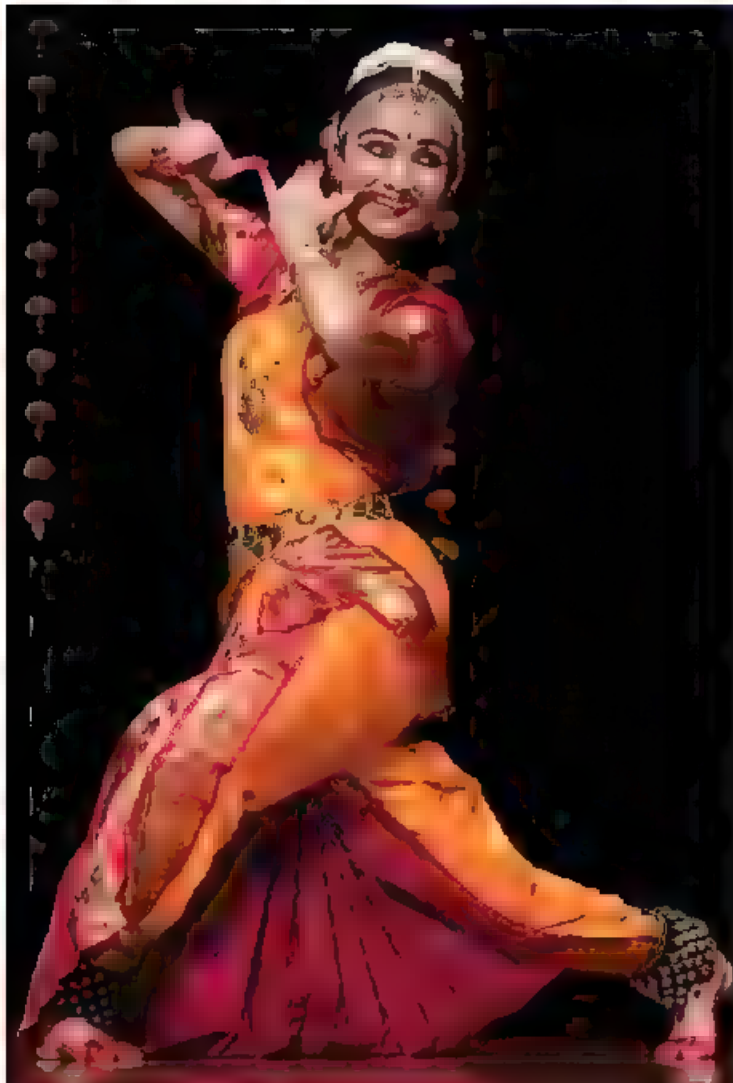
# Deepa Natarajan

6th May 2015, Hong Kong



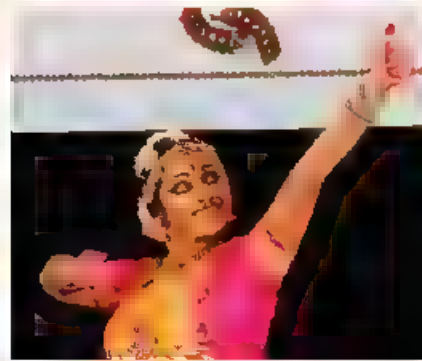
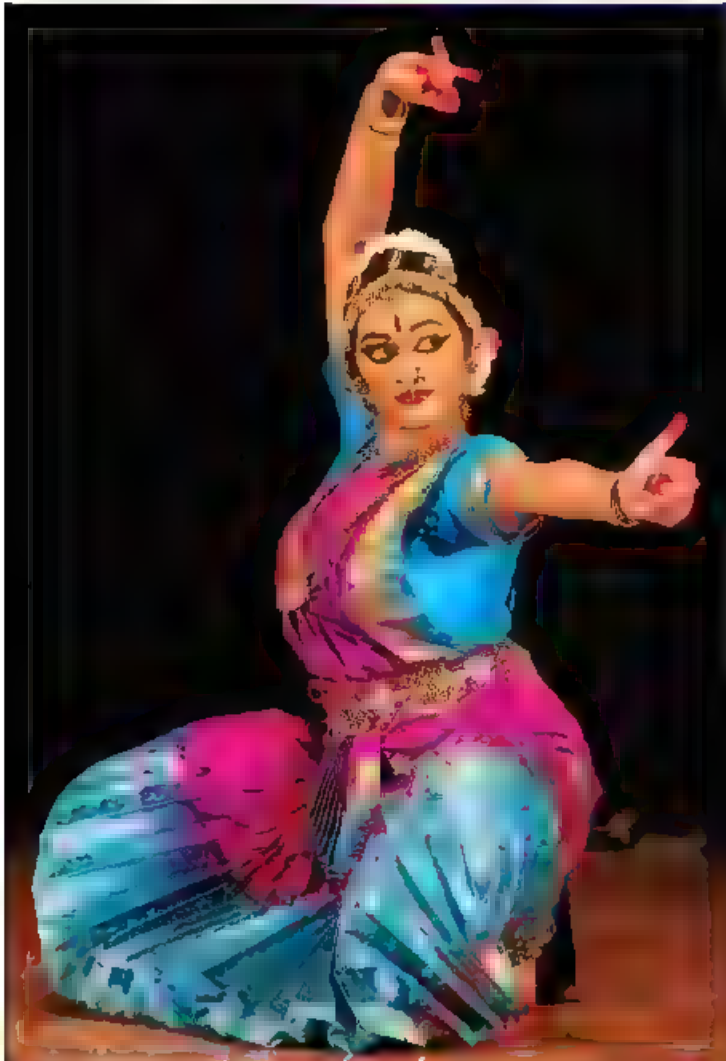
# Ashvatha Ramesh

22nd March 2015, Hong Kong



# Subhiksha Bhoovarahan

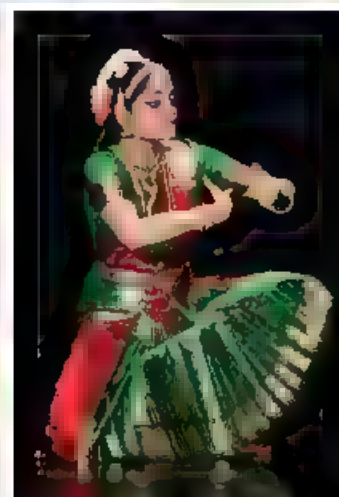
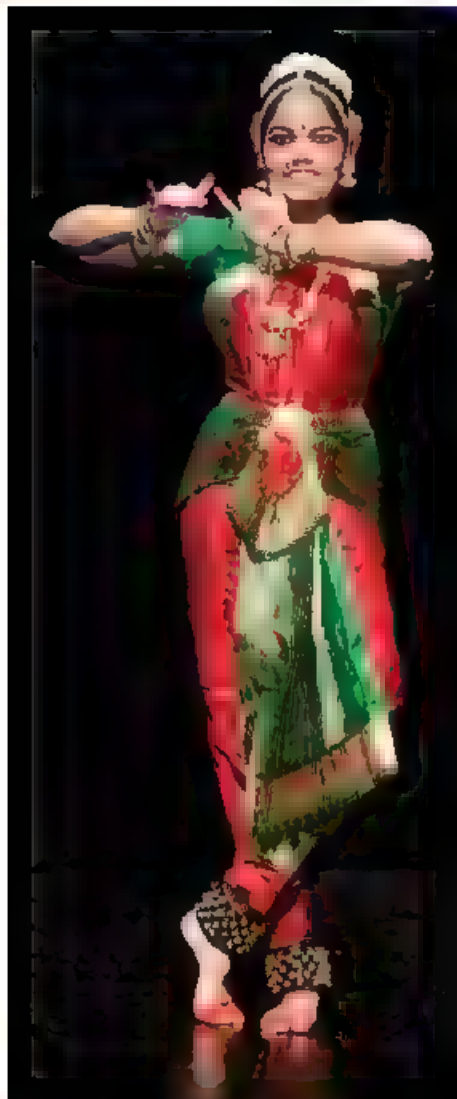
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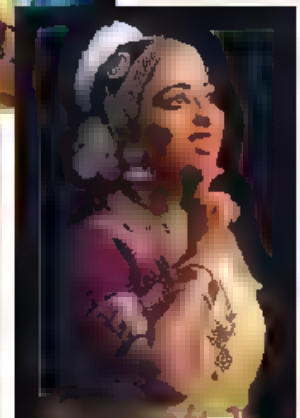
# Medha Vernekar

12th June 2016, Hong Kong



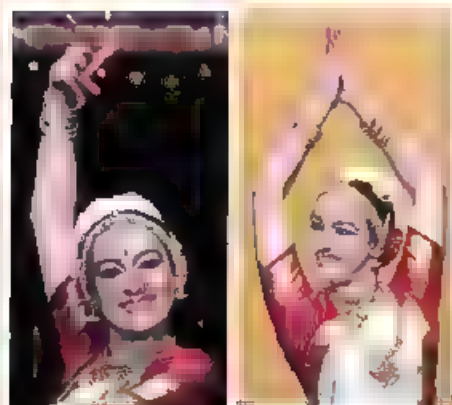
# Anusha Sridhar

16th November 2017, Hong Kong

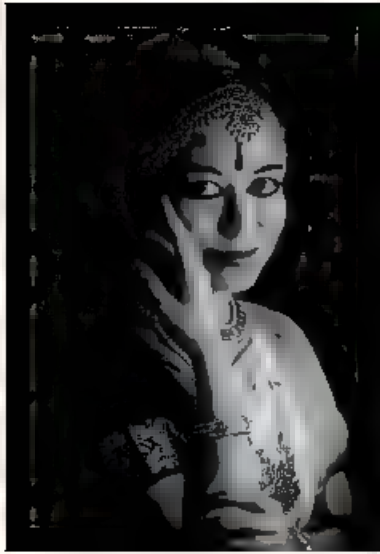


# Iswerya Ajay

29th March 2018, Hong Kong



# Fan Yuen Ching, Oceana



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Sri. Sundar Rajan

Sri. Senthil kumar Durai

Ms. Gayathri Sivakumar

Smt. Neerja Sujanani

Dance Gurus

Students

Parents



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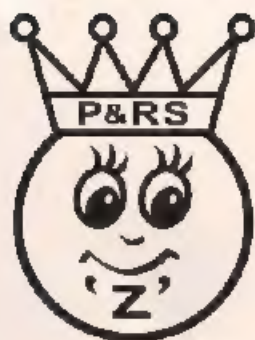
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